



# D2.1 Report on findings of Initial Investigations



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Executive Summary	<p>Research for this report has been conducted between January to June 2023 within the project TeaMLit. The report's main findings from five regions and countries – Ireland, Portugal, Belgium-Flanders, the German-speaking Community in Belgium and Baden-Württemberg Land in Germany – as well as an international review include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– On a global scale, both pre-and in-service teacher education in MIL is scarce, as found in an international review of academic papers and scientific reports.</li> <li>– Resources and supporting materials on MIL for in-service teachers are gaining relevance and presence across countries.</li> <li>– There is no single approach to MIL, and frameworks vary from country to country, and institution to institution.</li> <li>– MIL is often approached as an interdisciplinary, cross-sectional competence to be acquired in the curricula of all subjects and throughout all phases of teacher training.</li> <li>– Most programmes offered to pre-service teachers are tech-oriented and lack critical approaches.</li> </ul>

- Pre-service and in-service teachers struggle with the dynamic and constantly changing media field, which requires up-to-date approaches to tackling changes in MIL education.
- In-service training is more widely spread than pre-service, but assessing its contribution to MIL aims is challenging due to the absence of an evaluation framework.
- Teachers tend to prioritise using media to achieve an educational purpose rather than critically approaching MIL.
- In-service teachers may have opportunities to integrate MIL into their teaching but usually lack information and guidance on accessing existing resources.
- Collaborative learning and sharing experiences among teachers and teacher educators can lead to a more effective and comprehensive media literacy education for students.
- Research in teacher education is expected to add to the higher and more sustainable quality of teacher education in MIL.
- The processes during the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide have triggered a speedy acquisition of MIL know-how, peer-to-peer exchange, etc. It remains to be seen how much of the advances in MIL education will continue across subjects, educational levels and countries.
- From the end of 2022 there has been an international increase of discussions about the role of generative AI in teaching and learning contexts.

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# 1. Introduction

This report is conducted within the project TeaMLit – *Teacher Education in Digital and Media Literacy: Providing Guidance, Resources and Support for Teacher Trainers in Europe*, funded by the European Media and Information Fund (EMIF). This is the first of a series of 3 reports (in the period of 18 months between January 2023 and June 2024) that will discuss the study's main findings. The main aim guiding TeaMLit research is to carry out a thorough mapping, framing and analysis of current practices, barriers and opportunities in initial and in-service teacher training and continuing professional development in media and information literacy (MIL). This report comprehensively examines MIL training for teachers in five regions and countries: Ireland, Portugal, Belgium-Flanders, the German-speaking Community in Belgium as well as Germany's Baden-Württemberg Land. It also provides an overview of MIL practices and training on a global scale. The report is structured into eight main sections, each designed to offer insights into the current state of teacher training and education in MIL.

In addition to research (that this report covers), the TeaMLit project also aims to establish a sustainable network to provide guidance, resources and support for European teacher educators and trainers in MIL and in that way to directly advance students' abilities to tackle disinformation. To achieve this project goal, it is very important to understand the current state of MIL training in Europe. The project furthermore supports the idea that teachers have a very important role in empowering young citizens to facilitate media and information literacy in their classrooms. To fulfil this role, teachers need the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to address MIL topics with their students.

TeaMLit encompasses the following partners: Media and Learning Association (Belgium); Association for Communication and Media Culture (Croatia); Heidelberg School of Education (Germany); Mediawijs (Belgium); Dublin City University Institute for Media, Democracy, and Society (Ireland) and the Finnish Society on Media Education (Finland) as well as a host of supporting partners.

The following paragraphs of this introduction clarify TeaMLit's perspective on MIL, which is influenced by the collective expertise of the project partners and ongoing academic and field discussions. Furthermore, a brief description of the methodologies employed is offered, ensuring both the accuracy of the findings and their potential for replication.

The following parts of this report provide an international review of MIL approaches in various countries. The report then delves into the specific details for each region and country covered, segmenting the discussion into four key sections: MIL context, current practices, mapping of both pre- and in-service teachers training, and relevant policies that guide MIL initiatives within the country. This comprehensive analysis provides valuable insights for those new to the topic and those seeking to compare their existing practices with those implemented in the studied countries.

## Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Concept

The TeaMLit project considers that Media and Information Literacy (MIL) refers to interlinked competencies and knowledge required to access, find, analyse, evaluate and

produce media. MIL education aims at developing people’s critical skills for becoming well-informed, empowered and responsible citizens in democratic, equity- and justice-based societies. The subjects or topics related to MIL might involve but are not limited to critical thinking, dis-/mis-information, (social) media, multimodality, new literacies, online safety, data literacy, conspiracy theories, cyber issues, digital and technology skills, etc.

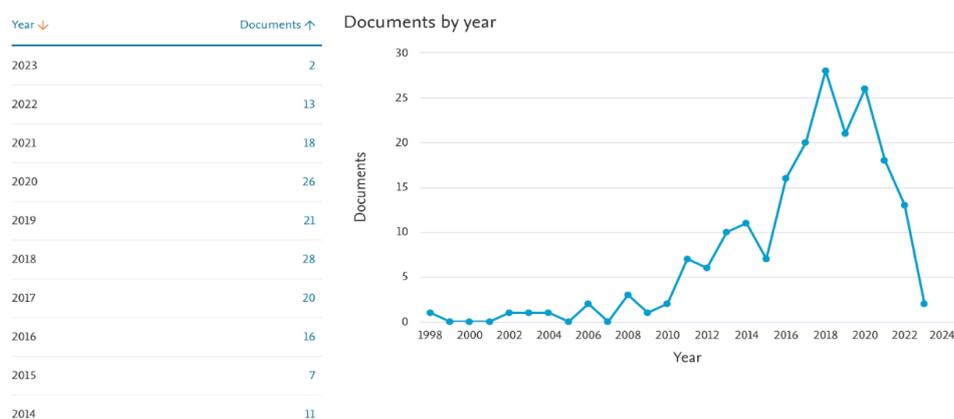
## Methodological Considerations

The study took a qualitative approach and used mainly desk research and interviews as research methods. In order to investigate the current state of MIL education and training for teachers on a global scale, the team conducted an in-depth analysis of 155 documents out of 197 sourced from Scopus, primarily from 2018, 2019 and 2020. The analysis was done using NVivo software (Figure 1).

This investigation allowed the classification of content into 20 categories, including ‘Curricula’, ‘Assessment’, ‘In-service Training’, ‘Pre-Service Training/Education’, ‘Context’, ‘Methods’, ‘Supporting Materials’, ‘Challenges’, ‘Approach’ and ‘Findings’ among others. Most contributions came from the United States, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Canada (Figure 2), and a word cloud was created to represent frequently occurring terms (Figure 3). The study discerned prevalent acronyms, theories, and approaches in the field and catalogued involved institutions and MIL programmes.

To investigate MIL training for teachers in the 5 target countries and regions, the team used desk research to analyse academic papers, policies, reports and websites of institutions that potentially offered MIL education and training for teachers in each country. In this stage, it was very important to have access to course and module content analysis syllabi, even though this information was not always available.

In the final stage of our study, we conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with key stakeholders in each country. Our focus was to explore the practices and experiences of teaching and learning Media and Information Literacy (MIL) and related subjects. We successfully engaged with teachers, educators, trainers, and other stakeholders involved in the MIL ecosystem. Our objective was to identify and analyse the available resources, understand the background of various programmes, projects, and initiatives, and gather information about the students' profiles, practical applications, and future developments. In total, we conducted interviews with 25 individuals, significantly contributing to our overall assessment of the situation and context in each country.





As outlined in the Methodology section, this review is based on academic papers and scientific reports from Scopus, primarily from 2018, 2019 and 2020, on topics related to Media and Information Literacy. In some cases, we also explored other resources, such as institutions' websites and policy reports, and conducted three interviews with key stakeholders involved in MIL training. It's important to note that most initiatives identified are Western-based, due to various factors, including definitional inconsistencies of the MIL concept, language barriers affecting access to local documents and reports, and the diverse political, economic, and social landscapes worldwide.

The main objective was to find information about what has been researched, analysed and discussed in relation to MIL education and training for teachers and educators, including information on national education systems, key stakeholders, educational resources, and best practices in teaching and learning with and about the media, especially digital media. Our analysis suggests that, even though Media and Information Literacy (MIL) education and training initiatives are increasingly present in many countries, most educational systems still lack a national-based curriculum or guidance for teaching and learning MIL (e.g., YouthWiki, 2022; DCMS, 2021; Kajimoto, Ito and Lim, 2020; Zhang, L., Zhang, H. and Wang, K., 2020; among others), and programmes specifically targeted towards teachers are scarce, with little public information available. Furthermore, the lack of MIL integration at the state level has resulted in various organisations contributing to this field, including voluntary work from scholars, teachers, students, professional bodies, and non-profit organisations.

Some countries have developed strategies to promote MIL, including incorporating some elements into the national curriculum. For instance, the United States is among the countries that offer national-based guidance to teaching MIL in schools. MIL elements are integrated into the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)<sup>1</sup>, which aim to ensure students are prepared for college, the workforce, and life in a technological society by integrating research and media skills into the curriculum (Allen, Griffin and Mindrila, 2022). The standards cover reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use, and they emphasise the importance of using technology and digital media effectively to work collaboratively and evaluate information (see Cappello, 2017; Boche and Henning, 2015). In the UK, the government has developed a strategy to improve media literacy competencies for users in the country, which includes setting a strategic direction, addressing gaps in the media literacy landscape, and reducing barriers for organisations involved in media literacy activity. A Media Literacy Knowledge and Skills Framework<sup>2</sup> has been established, and the latest Online Safety Bill from 2021<sup>3</sup> promised to strengthen Ofcom's role in promoting media literacy. However, teacher education and training in MIL in both countries is still incipient and it is unclear how it will be improved in the coming years (see Gibson and Connolly, 2023).

As one of the few countries where MIL is systematically taught at schools, the Philippines has led the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region by integrating MIL into

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<sup>1</sup> Common Core State Standards. Available at: <https://learning.ccsso.org/common-core-state-standards-initiative>

<sup>2</sup> GOV.UK. Policy paper Online Media Literacy Strategy. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-media-literacy-strategy>

<sup>3</sup> GOV.UK. Guidance A guide to the Online Safety Bill. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/a-guide-to-the-online-safety-bill>

the K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years) formal education programme and higher education curricula since 2013 (see Kajimoto, Ito and Lim, 2020). Despite this important achievement, MIL is optional for teacher certification in the country, forcing teachers to self-educate and engage in short courses provided by various institutions. Similarly, in South Korea, MIL elements have been incorporated into curriculum subjects such as Korean Language, Ethics, Social Studies, Arts and Practical Studies, and recent changes in the national curriculum included 'communication' and 'information processing' as part of its core competencies, which is seen as a support for MIL activities in schools. Despite these advances, teachers still have to rely on learning communities created by teachers themselves or occasional training opportunities offered by government bodies (see Yoon, Jeong, and Kim, 2019).

Brazil has a national-based curriculum which establishes knowledge, competencies, and skills expected to be developed by all students throughout basic education and is oriented by ethical, political, and aesthetic principles outlined by the National Curricular Guidelines for Basic Education. The last curriculum guideline published in 2017 includes some MIL elements, such as media uses and skills development. Still, it needs to provide clear information on the teaching and learning of MIL in schools, and teacher training is almost non-existent in the country. In May 2023, the Social Communication Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic (SECOM) launched a public consultation on Media Literacy that aims to systematise information and define the main approaches and actions in the field of media literacy<sup>4</sup>. According to the document, the main goal is to reach out, mobilise and receive contributions and suggestions from different sectors, including civil society, social movements, academics and other public and private institutions and bodies, in addition to collectives and individuals engaged in the theme, to promote a fruitful debate and improve the quality of the educational initiatives for the coming years.

## 2.1 Initial and in-service training

Despite some national strategies among the countries analysed that incorporate MIL as an element of educational practices, the task is often problematic due to a lack of prioritisation, insufficient resource allocation, and an absence of measurement tools and accountability. The provision of MIL education for teachers is limited and teacher education programmes need more preparation for teaching media and information literacy topics. Stakeholders generally agree that integrating MIL across subjects and providing teachers with the necessary knowledge and pedagogy is essential, and studies show that pre-service teachers demonstrate positive attitudes but need more support and preparation (e.g., Share, Mamikonyan and Lopez, 2019). Addressing this gap requires equipping educators with theory, pedagogy, and practical skills to teach media analysis and production effectively.

We found only a few examples of pre-service education on MIL for teachers in academic papers. At the University of California (UCLA), for example, the Critical Media Literacy (CML) course in the Teacher Education Programme<sup>5</sup> combines cultural studies and critical pedagogy with practical digital media applications. The course, mandatory for teaching

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<sup>4</sup> Consulta Pública Sobre Educação Midiática – Texto De Referência. Available at: <https://www.gov.br/participamaisbrasil/educacao-midiatica>

<sup>5</sup> Critical Media Literacy. Engaging Media and Transforming Education. Available at: <https://guides.library.ucla.edu/educ466>

credential candidates, encourages students to analyse and create media critically, preparing them to promote social and environmental justice in K-12 settings. The CML is offered to pre- and in-service teachers (Share, Mamikonyan and Lopez, 2019). In Switzerland, the Bachelor programme at an Italian-speaking University of Teacher Education in Canton Ticino designed and implemented a course on Digital Media Literacy for pre-service primary and pre-primary school teachers. According to Botturi (2019), in 2017, the course was optional and covered five key media literacy competencies: information access; content creation; media analysis; behaviour and ethics; and social action. These competencies were developed across 12 topics: social media, visual literacy, digital storytelling and cyberbullying.

In relation to in-service training, the lack of comprehensive information about methods, approaches, measurement tools, and accountability also presents a significant challenge in collecting data, especially regarding programmes provided by third-party organisations. Academic papers also provide limited information, often focusing on specific cases without providing a broader context or discussion (e.g., Gibson and Connolly, 2023; Caprino and Martínez-Cerdá, 2016). Our analysis shows that most initiatives primarily focus on providing resources, tools, and materials rather than offering comprehensive training to teachers. While there are notable initiatives, for instance, at the State, Government, and Public Entities levels, the emphasis is mostly on providing references and supporting materials to teachers rather than specific training and education programmes. However, a few studies shed light on important questions, such as how different groups access resources and support materials, the challenges teachers face in the increasingly digital classroom, and the complexities of technology and the media environment (e.g., Gretter and Yadav, 2018). Reports also account that educators interested in MIL often resort to self-teaching and short workshops to learn more about the topic, which can burden their workload (e.g., Kajimoto, Ito and Lim, 2020).

In Italy, 'Open the Box'<sup>6</sup> is a programme aimed at teachers and educators to enhance the digital skills of students between 11 to 18. Teachers go through self-paced online courses, live workshops, and personalised mentorship covering source-checking, visual culture, conspiracy thinking, data literacy, and AI. The programme also provides resources for independent workshop facilitation and it includes online challenges on fact-checking, data visualisation, and meme generation to further engage teachers and students in fighting misinformation and improving digital content creation. In Portugal, the Literacy for Media and Journalism Association (ALPMJ)'s<sup>7</sup> efforts focus on training teachers across various educational levels and fields, promoting media literacy through an education-based approach. ALPMJ distinguishes itself by focusing on ethical values in the media, encouraging citizens to discern information from misinformation. However, the scope of its influence may be limited by the number of teachers it can reach and train, which restricts the number of students who can benefit from its initiatives.

In Brazil, Educamídia<sup>8</sup> is an educational programme from the Palavra Aberta Institute with the support of Google.org created to train teachers and educational organisations and engage society in media literacy for young people. The organisation provides primary and

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<sup>6</sup> Open the Box. Available at: <https://www.openthebox.io/>

<sup>7</sup> ALPMJ. Available at: <https://associacaoliteracia.pt/>

<sup>8</sup> EducaMídia. Aprenda e Aplique. Available at: <https://educamidia.org.br/recursos>

secondary teachers with free educational resources and online training, especially in public schools. It also offers guidance on implementing media literacy strategies in schools nationwide and publishes articles and reports on the subject. In this case, again, the number of teachers who benefit from the MIL training is small compared with the total number of teachers in the country. In the United States, the News Literacy Project's professional learning provides training for teachers on news literacy concepts that they can integrate into the curriculum to provide students with the abilities, knowledge and confidence to navigate the complex and ever-changing information landscape. The organisation offers online and face-to-face workshops for educators from various subject areas and grade levels.

## 2.2 Media literacy initiatives

Even though information on MIL training for teachers is scarce, our analysis found some interesting initiatives that have the potential to assist teachers and educators and result in future partnerships, which can, in turn, contribute to training opportunities for teachers and educators. Media literacy networks have formed bringing together key stakeholders to promote media literacy on a national level, such as Media Literacy Ireland<sup>9</sup>, the Dutch Media Literacy Network<sup>10</sup> in the Netherlands, and the National Media Literacy Alliance in the United States<sup>11</sup>. Public bodies such as libraries and cultural centres have also increasingly participated in discussions and activities on media literacy. Stakeholders usually acknowledge that public libraries increasingly play a crucial role in teaching and learning MIL, particularly in European countries where they are recognised as hubs of information and lifelong learning (Kerrigan et al., 2023). Furthermore, collaboration between libraries, educational institutions, and government agencies is a recurring theme in developing and delivering MIL programmes (see DCMS, 2021; Hobbs, 2010; Barnes et al., 2007).

In the Netherlands, public libraries actively offer activities and training programmes to assist citizens in safely using digital technologies. These programmes include consultations with media coaches and target various age groups. Libraries are equipped with resources from organisations such as the Digi Stronger Foundation<sup>12</sup> to help set up consultation hours and offer vocational training. National bodies like the National Library of the Netherlands support local libraries to organise such initiatives<sup>13</sup>. The United States follows a slightly different approach, with the American Library Association (ALA) significantly promoting Information Literacy (IL) nationally and internationally. The ALA has long recognised the importance of IL in teacher education programmes and has set up IL standards in conjunction with other associations<sup>14</sup>. However, a consensus is that more work is needed to adequately implement IL into teacher training programmes. Thus, effectively integrating IL education into teacher training remains challenging (Botturi and Beretta, 2022).

We have also found increased participation of media organisations and legacy media in MIL initiatives (Yeoman and Morris, 2023). One example is the United Kingdom's Media

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<sup>9</sup> Media Literacy Ireland. Available at: <https://www.medialiteracyireland.ie/>

<sup>10</sup> Netwerk Mediawijsheid. Available at: <https://netwerkmediawijsheid.nl/>

<sup>11</sup> NAMLE. Available at: <https://namle.net/community/national-media-literacy-alliance/>

<sup>12</sup> Digisterker Foundation. Available at: <https://www.digisterker.nl/>

<sup>13</sup> National Library of the Netherlands. Available at: <https://www.kb.nl/en>

<sup>14</sup> American Library Association (ALA). Available at: <https://www.ala.org/>

Literacy Ambassador programme from the Guardian Foundation<sup>15</sup>. This initiative adopts a peer-led approach to teaching media literacy and promotes critical evaluation of news and the inclusion of underrepresented voices. It aims to ensure scalability and encourages long-term integration of media literacy skills within schools by training students to educate their peers. Also from the UK, the Economist Educational Foundation's Topical Talk<sup>16</sup> initiative provides disadvantaged children in the country with resources to engage with news critically. It involves weekly resources and special editions for deep diving into current events. The foundation aims to have 100,000 children participating regularly by 2026, and all resources are accessible for free through a Topical Talk account.

Another example of an initiative from the media industry is Poynter's Media Literacy programme<sup>17</sup>. According to our interviewee, the organisation has actively promoted projects and programmes in the United States and worldwide, mostly through the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN). Beyond that, Poynter's Media Literacy main programme is MediaWise, which works with schools and develops teaching materials in partnership with *Public Broadcasting Service* (PBS) Student Reporting Labs. They also collaborate with national and international media literacy organisations to support and address media literacy challenges. In Asia, the Asian Network of News & Information Educators (ANNIE)<sup>18</sup> is a good example of an initiative with strong ties with journalism and Higher Education Institutions. ANNIE has been able to reach many countries in Asia as a community-based organisation connected with the University of Hong Kong. It focuses on news and information education and the significance of understanding information flow and the fundamentals of journalism in today's media landscape. According to our interviewee, despite the many political and economic hurdles in many of the countries in the region, ANNIE has been able to develop teaching materials and promote inquiry-based, hands-on instruction to foster critical thinking and media literacy skills. As such, it has actively collaborated with educators, journalists, and civil society organisations throughout Asia to develop curricula, produce instructional resources, and organise workshops and seminars for individuals of all ages, including kindergarteners.

Many informal groups, non-profit organisations and NGOs are involved in MIL globally, posing benefits and challenges. We found cases from a broad spectrum of approaches to MIL from various geographical regions. Despite this diversity, some common themes and methods emerge. From our sample, many organisations in this group of providers emphasise the importance of critical thinking and media literacy. For instance, the US Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) focuses on ensuring students are college and career-ready in digital literacy by the end of high school. Similar goals are found in Brazil's EducaMídia, the American Library Association (ALA), Canada's MediaSmart<sup>19</sup>, and Belgium's MyDigiSkills<sup>20</sup>, each employing unique methods to foster these skills.

Most organisations combine digital and media literacy. This is evident in the Centre for Media Literacy (CML)<sup>21</sup> and Common Sense's approaches in the USA and MediaSmart in

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<sup>15</sup> The Guardian Foundation. Programmes. Available at: <https://theguardianfoundation.org/programmes>

<sup>16</sup> The Economist Educational Foundation. Teaching resource library. Available at: <https://talk.economistfoundation.org/resources/>

<sup>17</sup> Poynter. Media Literacy. Available at: <https://www.poynter.org/news/fact-checking/media-literacy/>

<sup>18</sup> The Asian Network of News & Information Educators. Available at: <https://www.annieasia.org/>

<sup>19</sup> MediaSmart. Available at: <https://mediasmarts.ca/break-fake/>

<sup>20</sup> MyDigiSkills. Available at: <http://mydigiskills.eu/>

<sup>21</sup> CML MediaLit Kit. Available at: <https://www.medialit.org/cml-medialit-kit>

Canada, which acknowledges the digital world's influence on contemporary media consumption and production. Also, several groups have designed their methods and resources to align with existing curricula. This strategy is apparent in the CCSSO's use of Common Core Standards and EducaMídia's alignment with Brazil's National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC). Moreover, a common approach among these providers is that entities prioritise collaboration, whether in creating standards (CCSSO), participating in media content (CML), or even engaging society in media education processes (EducaMídia). Similarly, Project Look Sharp in the U.S. encourages collaboration and communication across diverse perspectives. Comparatively, the CCSSO and the ALA focus more on a broad curriculum integrating media literacy into multiple subjects, whereas organisations such as the CML and MediaSmart provide more concentrated, media-specific programmes. EducaMídia and Project Look Sharp<sup>22</sup> stand out for their focus on critical thinking and active participation, and Checkology<sup>23</sup>, which is part of the News Literacy Project<sup>24</sup>, is distinctive in its interactive e-learning platform led by professional journalists.

## 2.3 Final Comments

There is a growing understanding of the importance of MIL education by scholars, academics and researchers worldwide, including concerning the provision of more resources and training for teachers and educators. However, our analysis shows that the topic 'MIL education and training for teachers' is underrepresented and receives limited attention in academic articles and scientific reports. Even when some examples are found, further investigation is necessary to understand how these trainings are provided, their scope in reach and potential, the pedagogical approaches utilised, and the associated benefits and challenges.

Initial or pre-service training for teachers is usually provided by Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and, in most cases, it involves the inclusion of MIL elements in modules related to technology and digital learning. As the following sections of this report will show, finding information about these training courses and programmes is not always easy as many institutions do not make this information available. Furthermore, specificities in each country and their educational systems further complicate the understanding of how teachers are educated, the paths they follow once they graduate, and how MIL knowledge and skills are effectively applied in the classroom. Making a thorough and detailed assessment of pre-service training in MIL for teachers demands a meticulous investigation in each country. In our analysis, only a few examples were found, which suggests that pre-service training in MIL is still insufficient in most HEI that provide teacher education. Similarly, mentions, references and examples of in-service training for teachers in MIL in our sample were small. However, as this form of education can take many different formats and be provided by diverse organisations, our analysis suggests that there are more opportunities for teachers to learn about MIL after they start teaching in schools or other educational institutions.

There is no shortage of institutions creating and sharing resources on MIL, especially in English. Governments and public organisations also have a growing interest in the subject.

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<sup>22</sup> Project Look Sharp - Ithaca College (NY). Available at: <https://projectlooksharp.org/lessons-and-kits.php/>

<sup>23</sup> Checkology. Available at: <https://get.checkology.org/>

<sup>24</sup> News Literacy Project. Available at: <https://newsliit.org/>

Funding opportunities for MIL topics, especially related to the fight against disinformation, have never been higher. All that creates a timely opportunity for advancing the debate on providing MIL training for teachers. The TeaMLit network is a significant step towards this goal, but other initiatives, both at local and international levels, are necessary to evaluate the needs and establish common educational strategies for the sector, bringing together researchers, educators, policymakers and other key stakeholders.

## 3. Ireland

With over 5 million residents, the Republic of Ireland (or just Ireland) is a parliamentary representative republic consisting of 26 counties. County Dublin, where the capital city is located, is home to almost 30% of the country's population. Executive power is led by the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), whose deputy is the Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister), and the Oireachtas is the bicameral national parliament, comprising the Dáil Éireann (lower house) and the Seanad Éireann (upper house). Irish is constitutionally recognised as the country's national and first official language; according to the latest census, 42 per cent of the population report a good level of ability in Irish. The second official language, English, is the dominant and prevailing language spoken in the country. Ireland is ranked as one of the wealthiest countries in Europe regarding GDP per capita, and its Human Development Index (HDI) is among the highest in the continent.

In Ireland, the Department of Education oversees both primary and post-primary education. In contrast, higher and further education is under the responsibility of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The education system comprises three stages: early years (optional), primary, and post-primary (or secondary) education. The compulsory age to begin education is 6 years, but in practice, most children begin primary schooling before that. Primary education consists of an 8-year cycle, and post-primary education consists of a three-year junior cycle followed by a two- or three-year senior cycle, depending on whether the optional transition year is taken. The vast majority of pupils attend state-funded schools, which are available at all levels. Over 90% of primary schools and around 50% of secondary schools in the country are under Catholic patronage.

### 3.1 MIL in Ireland

Efforts to promote MIL in Ireland have been ongoing for over three decades (O'Neill, 2019; Barnes et al., 2007). However, media literacy only recently acquired a more important status in the country. In 2016, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) launched its first Media Literacy Policy<sup>25</sup>, which aimed to empower Irish citizens with the skills to engage with media content critically and encourage stakeholder cooperation in promoting media literacy. Even though there was some criticism concerning the need for clearer definitions and approaches to stakeholders' roles and responsibilities, the policy was well received and has since played an important role in the discussions about MIL strategies in the country.

The BAI also facilitated the establishment of Media Literacy Ireland (MLI)<sup>26</sup>, an independent association chaired by Prof. Brian O'Neill, a member of the Council of Europe's Expert Group on Digital Citizenship Education, and coordinated by Martina Chapman, an independent MIL consultant with extensive expertise in the field. In 2023, MLI reached more than 300 members representing various sectors, including media, technology platforms, education, libraries, and civil society. The network fosters collaboration among

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<sup>25</sup> Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (2016) 'BAI launches Media Literacy Policy', Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, 6 December. Available at: <https://www.bai.ie/en/bai-launches-media-literacy-policy/>

<sup>26</sup> Media Literacy Ireland. Available at: <https://www.medialiteracyireland.ie/>

its members through different working groups to develop media literacy initiatives nationwide.

In 2019, MLI launched Be Media Smart, a successful national campaign whose concept and resources were freely shared with European partners resulting in the replication of the campaign in four regions – North Macedonia, the Czech Republic, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Norway (Russell, 2019). The network also organises an annual media literacy conference bringing scholars and practitioners from Ireland and abroad. It has recently created the Media Literacy Awards, which aims to recognise and raise awareness of MIL projects and practices that are being done in the country. Its new website, launched in December 2022, has a repository of MIL resources for educators, academics, and people interested in learning about media literacy concepts, practices and policies.

In academia, the Institute of Future Media, Democracy and Society (FuJo)<sup>27</sup> based at Dublin City University coordinates the Ireland hub of the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)<sup>28</sup>. The research centre leads research projects in MIL, participates as an advisor in meetings with key stakeholders in the country, such as the Department of Foreign Affairs, and coordinates several MIL initiatives across the country, such as webinars and training workshops for teachers and librarians.

In the realm of education, the Adult Literacy for Life<sup>29</sup> is a 10-year strategy launched by the Irish Minister for Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science & Justice on September 8th, 2021. The goal of the strategy is to ensure that every adult in Ireland has the necessary literacy, numeracy, and digital skills to engage in society fully and realise their potential. The strategy's commitments include increasing the number of learners engaging with literacy and language support, reducing the number of adults in Ireland with unmet literacy and numeracy needs, and reducing the share of adults without basic digital skills. The strategy development included contributions from 123 organisations, 450 individuals, and 1,100 surveyed for their views.

In relation to policies, a notable change has occurred with the incorporation of a new regulatory body called Coimisiún na Meán<sup>30</sup>, which replaced the BAI in March 2023. Its role in media and information literacy is yet to be defined, but it should align with BAI's Media Literacy Policy and the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022<sup>31</sup>. The new commission has taken over BAI's responsibilities, establishing a regulatory framework for online safety, and updating regulations for television broadcasting and audiovisual on-demand services. In June 2023, the Commission published its work programme for the next nine months outlining its main objectives, including new regulatory regimes, support for the media sector and promoting media literacy. However, throughout the programme, the only significant mention of media literacy is under the 'media development' category, whereby the organisation plans to promote 'stakeholder events' on the topic without any further detail.

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<sup>27</sup> DCU Institute for Future Media Democracy and Society. Available at: <https://fujomedia.eu/>

<sup>28</sup> The European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) Ireland Hub. Available at: <https://edmohub.ie/>

<sup>29</sup> SOLAS. Resources. Available at: <https://www.adultliteracyforlife.ie/resources/>

<sup>30</sup> Coimisiún na Meán. About. Available at: <https://www.cnam.ie/about-us/>

<sup>31</sup> Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022. (Act 41 of 2022). Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill 2022 (Bill 6 of 2022). Available at: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2022/6/>

## 3.2 MIL in the Irish Education System

Similar to most European countries, Ireland lacks a national strategy to implement media literacy in schools, and the topic is not present in the Irish curriculum as a separate subject or discipline. However, there are some elements of media literacy spread across the curriculum, such as, for example, topics around online safety, creative art with digital media, film studies<sup>32</sup>, journalism and the political economy of the media (see Barnes et al., 2007). There are also opportunities to explore media literacy in Transition Year programmes due to its flexibility and openness to new experiences, and the fact that digital technology is increasingly becoming part of classroom practices allows both teachers and students to use new devices to explore many topics related to media literacy.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), a statutory organisation established in 2001, is crucial in guiding the education system. It advises the Minister for Education and Skills on curriculum and assessment for various levels of education, from early childhood to post-primary schools. This guidance is derived from engagements with educational institutions, committees, and working groups and is informed by research, evaluation, and foresight.

NCCA's Curriculum Online platform<sup>33</sup> provides curriculum documentation and supporting materials for different age groups, ranging from ages 1 – 6 (Aistear), 5 – 12 (primary), 12 -15 (junior cycle), and 16 – 18 (senior cycle). Some elements of Media Literacy are incorporated in the Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) programmes of both Primary and Junior cycles. Media literacy topics also appear in Transition Units (TU) that can be used in the Transition Year, the first year of the Senior Cycle. The NCCA has also developed short courses for the Junior Cycle. These courses are optional and schools can decide which ones they want to incorporate into their programmes. One of these courses is called Digital Media Literacy (DML), and it was designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills to use digital media safely, effectively, and independently. The development of this short course has been one of the most significant achievements for media literacy education in the Irish educational system as it opened the opportunity for thousands of post-primary students to engage in topics that are crucial for their development as young adults and citizens.

In May 2023, the NCCA put forward a consultation to evaluate how the DML short course<sup>34</sup> has been developed in schools nationwide, seeking opinions and recommendations from teachers, principals, educators and media literacy experts. It is expected that after this consultation, there will be some changes in the syllabus to accommodate current topics such as Artificial Intelligence and Algorithms and a more critical and civic approach to media literacy.

In terms of resources, organisations such as MediaWise<sup>35</sup> and Barnardos<sup>36</sup> have been developing digital resources on various topics around media literacy for different

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<sup>32</sup> IFI Education. Available at: <https://ifi.ie/studyguides>. IFI@Schools. Available at: <https://www.ifischools.ie/welcome>

<sup>33</sup> National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). Curriculum online. Available at: <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Senior-cycle/Curriculum/>

<sup>34</sup> CurriculumOnline. Digital Media Literacy short course. Available at: <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Short-Courses/Digital-Media-Literacy/>

<sup>35</sup> Mediawise. Available at: <https://www.webwise.ie/teachers/>

<sup>36</sup> Barnardos. Available at: <https://www.barnardos.ie/>

purposes and audiences, and government support services, such as the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), offer guidance and resources to educators in the country. Its technology strand, called PDST Technology in Education<sup>37</sup>, includes services such as Webwise, which develops and disseminates resources on digital media and online safety; Arts in Junior Cycle, a programme that provides training for teachers, including topics related to digital media literacy; and Scoilnet<sup>38</sup>, an online repository of educational resources with over 24,000 items listed on its website, including a few on digital media literacy.

### 3.3 MIL in Teacher Training

You can become a school teacher in Ireland either by completing an undergraduate Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme or a two-year postgraduate programme called Professional Master of Education (PME). Even though this system is valid for both primary and post-primary levels, post-primary teachers who wish to take the PME programme must have an undergraduate degree related to a curricular subject area, such as physics, history or biology. A minimum Leaving Certificate qualification in Irish is required for all primary teachers, whereas post-primary teachers only need this qualification in case they teach in a Gaeltacht school where teaching is done in Irish<sup>39</sup>.

Applications for teacher training programmes are processed by the Central Applications Office (CAO)<sup>40</sup>, a not-for-profit company handling applications for first-year undergraduate courses in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Selection is based on qualifications, an interview, and an Irish language oral examination. Postgraduate applications are made through the Postgraduate Applications Centre (PAC)<sup>41</sup> or directly to institutions like the National University of Ireland or Dublin City University.

To register in the Further Education sector, teachers must meet qualification requirements specified by the Teaching Council's regulations. Once the degree qualifications are met, they are eligible for conditional registration for three years, during which they must complete a Council-accredited teacher education qualification.

The Teaching Council<sup>42</sup> requires all Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes to include core elements such as inclusive education, global citizenship education, literacy and numeracy, and digital skills, among others, to ensure student teachers are prepared to meet the needs of diverse learners. Twenty institutions provide initial teacher education programmes in Ireland, from which we found 13 offer modules or courses related to media and information literacy (MIL).

#### 3.3.1 Pre-Service Training

In Ireland, the education of teachers is highly regulated and information about undergraduate and postgraduate courses is currently available on the Teaching Council

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<sup>37</sup> PDST Technology in Education. Available at: <https://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/courses-practice/>

<sup>38</sup> Scoilnet. Available at: <https://www.scoilnet.ie/>

<sup>39</sup> Department of Education. More information about teaching in Ireland. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/0595a4-e/#>

<sup>40</sup> Central Applications Office (CAO). Available at: <https://www.cao.ie/index.php?page=aboutCAO>

<sup>41</sup> Postgraduate Applications Centre (PAC). Available at: <https://pacapply.com/about-us/>

<sup>42</sup> The Teaching Council. Providers of Initial Teacher Education. Available at: <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/teacher-education/initial-teacher-education/providers-of-initial-teacher-education/>

website. Looking through universities' websites, syllabi and documents, it is clear that there is a significant need for more pre-service training on MIL for student teachers in the country. Although we found 13 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that offer courses and modules that touch on MIL-related subjects, most of them only offer these modules as optional for student teachers. Upon analysing the syllabi of these modules and courses, we found that they were primarily related to technology applied to teaching and learning, the use of ICT in schools, and aspects of digital-related subjects such as skills development, technology, literacy, learning, and education. However, we found only a few courses and modules that promote subjects directly related to Media and Information Literacy.

One of the few examples is found in Dublin City University (DCU), where most pre-service primary education is at the level of a bachelor of education. Also, out of more than 20 modules that we identified and analysed as potentially including teaching materials and syllabi related to MIL, only five modules approach MIL directly, and all except one are optional. One of these modules is 'Meaning Making with Multimedia', which involves evaluating how multimedia production can enhance teaching and learning in the classroom, creating digital artefacts based on multiliteracies principles, justifying their design using research literature, and reflecting on their creation and implementation with a small group of children. Another one is 'Multimodality in Early Childhood', which examines how young children make and express meaning through different modes, including art, play, and digital technologies. The module covers the evaluation of young children's meaning-making practices when using digital technologies.

Another two modules can be put together, namely 'Assessment of Digital Learning and Spatial Inclusive Education' and 'Enabling Learning'. These modules cover various media and information literacy aspects but take a more technical and practical approach. Both modules are compulsory Bachelor of Education programme components. The former focuses on digital learning, assessment, and spatial inclusive education. It involves creating digital books, using bots, addressing online safety and misinformation, developing online portfolios, coding skills, and scratch programming in the second semester. The module emphasises critical evaluation, practical skills, creativity, and critical thinking. Students in this module create digital artefacts like storybooks and videos using software tools such as Book Creator, Story Jumper, and Adobe Spark, and animation is taught using Scratch. There is also an important component of pedagogy and creativity in leveraging technology for enhanced learning. The course utilises the EUDigComp framework to address critical aspects of media, including online safety and misinformation, through activities like analysing fake news videos.

The 'Enabling Learning' module focuses on developing student teachers' digital skills and assessment strategies in the primary school context. According to the module's syllabus, the students create a digital artefact, such as an infographic, on a different assessment modality and complete formative tasks. The coursework emphasises computational thinking, coding, and game-based learning. The module also covers classroom assessment and the use of norm-referenced standardised tests. Overall, the goal is for students to gain knowledge and expertise in designing inclusive learning activities and critically reviewing current debates and policies on standardised testing.

Finally, a module focused on social media is one of the few that addresses this subject at DCU and across other HEI in Ireland. The module 'Social Media, Wellbeing & Society' is

optional and covers the relationship between social media and young people's well-being, including online safety risks and policy responses on social media platforms. It aims to prepare student teachers to understand digital platforms' main issues and challenges and prepare them to deal with this topic in the classroom.

In Trinity College Dublin, the Professional Master of Education programme that qualifies graduates as post-primary teachers has a module called Digital Learning (former ICT in Education). Back in 2015, this module was the first in Ireland to have a class on Multimodality, Semiotics and New Literacies. The aim was to provide student teachers with basic knowledge about how digital media transforms classroom communication through new forms of representation and meaning-making practices. In 2022, the module included a new class on critical media literacy whereby students discuss topics such as information disorder, online safety and privacy, and media representation.

We also identified a few study and research centres relevant to the topic, such as the National Institute for Digital Learning and the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre<sup>43</sup> at Dublin City University. The Digital Learning Research Network comprises core staff from the National Institute for Digital Learning<sup>44</sup> and the Institute of Education and over 50 DCU staff members. They have specialist Digital, Blended, and Online Learning knowledge and are available for consultancy services and postgraduate research supervision. DCU's Anti-Bullying Centre is a research centre dedicated to solving problems related to bullying and online safety. Their work is aligned with the United Nations' goal of quality education and the Irish government's plans on bullying and safety.

### 3.3.2 In-Service Training

Unlike student teachers, teachers already working in schools have a few more opportunities in terms of training and resources on digital media and the use of technology in education. Training and resources are offered through different organisations and channels, including Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), like universities and colleges, third-party organisations such as agencies, charity groups, associations, and government-supported bodies. However, training programmes focusing on media and information literacy are still scarce.

In Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), we found courses, modules and certifications in Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Atlantic Technological University (ATU), University College Cork (UCC), Trinity College Dublin (TCD), University of Galway, University College Cork (UCC) and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT). Each institution offers different courses and certificates primarily focusing on Continuing Professional Development (CPD), including topics such as Digital Literacy and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education.

Courses at these institutions are tailored to address the evolving needs of the education sector in the digital era. They equip educators with skills such as designing and implementing a digital learning model (MIC), enhancing children's learning using ICT (MIC), integrating technology and coding in classroom teaching (ATU), and using technology to improve teaching and learning processes (UCC, TCD, and WIT). However, the level of detail provided for these courses varies. Some elements of MIL are present in these

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<sup>43</sup> DCU Anti-Bullying Centre. About. Available at: <https://antibullyingcentre.ie/about-us/>

<sup>44</sup> National Institute for Digital Learning. About. Available at: <https://www.dcu.ie/nidl>

programmes, but the content is much more focused on digital learning and the use of technology in the classroom.

Besides Higher Education Institutions, other organisations, such as agencies, charities, and associations, offer teachers resources and training opportunities in MIL. In this regard, the Government of Ireland's Department of Education plays a very important role, especially through the PDST Technology in Education<sup>45</sup>. Even though its focus is mainly on digital learning and the general use of technology in education, the service offers a few online courses for teachers on topics related to MIL, such as digital citizenship, cyberbullying, digital storytelling and creating podcasts. On its website, teachers also have access to 'good practice videos', videos recorded in schools around the country showing best practices on the use of technology and digital media by teachers and students in different situations and contexts. Other teachers can then be inspired by these videos and develop similar activities in their schools.

As mentioned, the service manages other important initiatives such as Scoilnet, Arts in Junior Cycle and Webwise. The latter has been particularly relevant to integrating digital technology in teaching and learning in first- and second-level schools through developing and disseminating educational resources and participating in national campaigns to raise awareness on topics such as online safety, disinformation and cyberbullying. However, in terms of training, Webwise has a very small capacity, so training is limited to the occasional delivery of workshops at conferences and other small events for both pre- and in-service teachers. Arts in Junior Cycle has recently partnered with a media educator from Dublin City University to provide workshops in MIL for secondary teachers, and another workshop on 'checking the facts' specifically for teachers who teach the Digital Media Literacy short course. This was a very important initiative, but in terms of scale, it only reached a few dozen educators.

Charity groups such as the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)<sup>46</sup> and 80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World<sup>47</sup> significantly promote adult literacy, including digital literacy and critical thinking (e.g., Kerrigan et al., 2023). They offer different programmes and teaching materials and involve students in policy-making and activism. They partnered to develop a media literacy resource called 'Facts Matter: a guide to building critical media literacy in today's world'<sup>48</sup>. The material introduces the topic to adult education practitioners who wish to build their students' knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence in critical thinking, media and digital literacy. However, there is no information available on how educators have used the material or if any training has been provided.

Both HEIs and third-party organisations aim to equip teachers with the necessary skills to adapt to the digital era, albeit through different approaches. HEIs focus on providing academic and professional qualifications through structured courses and degrees, emphasising subject knowledge and pedagogical methods. These programmes generally provide teachers with a comprehensive and theoretical foundation, enhancing their ability to design and implement digital learning models.

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<sup>45</sup> PDST Technology in Education. Available at: <https://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/courses-practice/>

<sup>46</sup> National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA). Available at: <https://www.learnwithnala.ie/>

<sup>47</sup> 80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World. Available at: <https://8020.ie/>

<sup>48</sup> Facts Matter. Available at: <https://8020.ie/facts-matter/>

On the other hand, third-party organisations offer more practical, situation-specific resources and training. They primarily address immediate concerns such as online safety, adult literacy, and the application of ICT in classrooms. These organisations also tend to promote inclusivity and equal access to education, targeting not just teachers but also students, parents, and the wider community.

While HEIs provide a more formal and systematic approach to MIL, digital learning and ICT in education, third-party organisations provide practical, context-specific resources and training, targeting a broader audience. Both approaches are crucial for preparing teachers for the digital era and ensuring an inclusive, safe, and effective learning environment.

### 3.4 Final Comments

Attempts to promote MIL in Ireland have been ongoing for over three decades, with some important curriculum reforms that provided opportunities for studying the media across primary and secondary education. Some elements of MIL can be found in the Irish curriculum spread across different disciplines, and the implementation of the Digital Media Literacy short course provides schools with the opportunity to offer media literacy education to Junior Cycle students. Furthermore, the fact that Ireland is an English-speaking country means that there is a reasonable availability of MIL resources supplied by various stakeholders, both locally and internationally, that teachers can use in the classroom. However, the lack of a clear national strategy, the absence of comprehensive education and training for teachers, and the informal nature of media literacy education in Irish schools have hindered the development of MIL in the Irish educational system.

Stakeholders in the country usually agree that teachers are crucial to the development of MIL in Irish schools. There have been some improvements in pre-service training in MIL for teachers with the inclusion of some MIL topics in courses and modules, especially the ones related to technology and digital learning. In-service training in MIL has also improved over the past years, with organisations such as Webwise offering online courses on MIL topics for teachers. However, these improvements are still small in scope and the overall state of MIL training for teachers in the country is inadequate.

Furthermore, the absence of research, data, assessment tools, and national-level ownership results in an environment that is filled with uncertainty, which puts the development of teacher training in MIL at risk. Our research suggests that in order to improve MIL in schools and prepare teachers to undertake this task, there needs to be a more centralised approach to MIL in the country, bringing together key stakeholders into a national project with clear aims, strategies and policies.

## 4. Portugal

Portugal, perched on the Iberian Peninsula's western edge, is home to over 10 million people. The country is a semi-presidential republic, whereby the President is the head of state and holds significant influence. The Prime Minister, as the head of government, manages the day-to-day operations. The Assembly of the Republic, the unicameral parliament, legislates national laws and oversees the government's functioning. The country has an ageing demographic, with about 21% of its population being over 65, reflecting a common trend in southern European countries. There's a steady influx of immigrants in the country, mostly from former Portuguese colonies, such as Angola and Brazil. Economically, Portugal has recently made substantial progress towards a diversified and innovation-centric economy, where sectors like technology, renewable energy, and tourism have risen in prominence.

In Portugal, the Ministry of Education (Ministério da Educação - ME) is the governmental department responsible for managing preschool, basic, and upper secondary education, and it also has other responsibilities, such as articulating education strategies with qualification and vocational training policies. Higher education is overseen by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education (Ministério da Ciência, Tecnologia e Ensino Superior - MCTES). Compulsory education lasts between the age of six and eighteen or until the conclusion of upper secondary education. State-funded education is available from the age of four, including the final years of preschool. The education system is divided into preschool education, which includes pupils from the age of three up to the age of compulsory schooling; basic education, which involves 3 different cycles and covers children from six up to 15 years of age; and upper secondary education, which lasts for three years and corresponds to final years of compulsory education in the country.

### 4.1 MIL in Portugal

The history of media literacy in Portugal reflects a complex trajectory, with notable achievements and persistent challenges in promoting the topic as a crucial dimension of citizenship and education (Pinto, 2014). Two significant periods can be identified in Portugal's media literacy history. The first period is characterised by the introduction of democratic education in 1986, following the revolution of 1974 (Dias-Fonseca and Potter, 2016). This period saw the emergence of initiatives related to media education, particularly in school journalism and film language, and the inclusion of media-related topics in the national curriculum (Fundamental Law of the Educational System), which allowed students in the tenth and eleventh grades to study journalism as a core discipline. Pioneering movements inspired by pedagogical innovation and opposition to the authoritarian culture of the previous regime played a key role.

In the 1990s, the creation of the Department of Innovative Education significantly bolstered the media literacy movement. It not only brought innovative educational practices related to media into the limelight but also nurtured the seeds of journalism, cinema, and radio sown in the lives of Portuguese students. Despite this, implementing media literacy initiatives were somewhat fragmented and lacked coherence.

The second period began with technological advancements, such as the Internet, web 2.0, and social networks, significantly changing media consumption, production, and dissemination. Contact with international academia and media literacy experiences expanded, leading to collaborations, research networks, and the integration of media literacy into higher education institutions. Also, this period is marked by the introduction, in the 2000s, of civic education in schools (Lopes and Moreira, 2022). However, media literacy remained absent from public agendas and political platforms, indicating a lack of sustained support and recognition.

Parallely, the media industry in Portugal also started taking strides towards promoting media education, with various initiatives, such as '7 Days with the Media'<sup>49</sup>, which is a project started in 2012 and that is inspired by similar actions from back in the 1980s. Later, the Portuguese newspaper Público upped the ante by launching 'Público na Escola'<sup>50</sup> and the TRUE project<sup>51</sup>, thereby facilitating the creation of school newspapers. Another newspaper, Diário de Notícias, joined the media literacy drive with the MediaLab project. Backed by UNESCO, it promoted intergenerational connections in an era where access to education was uneven across generations. Unfortunately, the decline of traditional media worldwide hampered their capacity to drive MIL initiatives further.

Another significant step forward in providing key recommendations for structuring Media Education, according to our interviewees and studies in the area (e.g., Pinto, 2014; Lopes, 2011), was the Declaration of Braga, from the 1st National Congress on Literacy, Media, and Citizenship<sup>52</sup>, which played an essential role integrating Media Education content in the curriculum and promoting networking and collaboration.

In 2014, the 'Media Education Benchmark for Pre-School Education, Basic Education and Secondary Education'<sup>53</sup> was published by the Directorate-General for Education (DGE), providing a reference framework for teaching and learning MIL in schools. Despite its value, it faces limited awareness among schools and professionals, and due to the busy curriculum, MIL subjects are often overlooked. DGE is revising the document; an updated version will be published soon.

In recent years, the Informal Group on Media Literacy (GILM)<sup>54</sup>, led by the Regulatory Authority for the Media, took the helm of numerous media literacy initiatives. Comprising several entities from different sectors, the GILM successfully bridged various stakeholders in education, scientific research, public policies, and media, fostering dialogue, reflection, and collaboration.

Another interesting development was the establishment of the Literacy for Media and Journalism Association (ALPMJ), aiming to educate citizens and teachers about complex media and misinformation issues. In one of its initiatives, the association partnered with

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<sup>49</sup> 7 Dias com os Media. Available at: <https://7diascomosmedia.gilm.pt/>

<sup>50</sup> Público na Escola. Available at: <https://www.publico.pt/publico-na-escola>

<sup>51</sup> Literacia Mediática. Projeto TRUE. Available at: <https://www.publico.pt/publico-na-escola/artigo/projeto-true-2029972>

<sup>52</sup> Actas do 1º Congresso Nacional. Available at: <http://www.lasics.uminho.pt/ojs/index.php/lmc/issue/current/showToc>

<sup>53</sup> Referencial de Educação para os Media. Educação para os Media. Direção-Geral da Educação. Available at: <https://www.dge.mec.pt/educacao-para-os-media>

<sup>54</sup> Informal Group on Media Literacy (GILM). Available at: <https://congressolmc.gilm.pt/en/>

Cenjor – the Centre for Vocational Training for Journalists – allowing for direct teacher training, contributing to successful school media literacy projects.

At the state level, the Ministry of Education in Portugal, supported by the National Strategy for Citizenship Education (ENEC)<sup>55</sup>, endeavoured to infuse citizenship education throughout all education levels. Furthermore, the Directorate-General for Education (DGE) and the Working Group on Citizenship Education further solidified the government's approach to education, emphasising 21st-century competencies like sustainability, interculturality, equality, and democratic participation<sup>56</sup>. Citizenship Education incorporates media literacy competencies guiding active societal engagement (see Lopes and Moreira, 2022). Moreover, the Media module is part of the Citizenship and Development (CeD) subject, aligning with several competence areas defined in the Student Profile.

In 2020, Media Literacy was legally integrated into the Regulatory Authority for the Media (ERC) competencies, with Law n.º 74/2020<sup>57</sup> mandating a triennial report production. This law also transposes Directive (EU) 2018/1808 into Portugal's internal legal system, adjusting laws related to television, Video-On-Demand services, cinema, and audiovisual activities. ERC now oversees video-sharing platforms' compliance with the law, user protection, and promotion of media literacy. Special attention is given to people with special needs, ensuring accessibility of media literacy materials in formats like sign language and captions.

Furthermore, the country has implemented several initiatives to enhance Digital, Media and Information Literacies, including the Technological Plan, the Safe Internet initiative, and the Digital Skills e 2030 – Portugal initiative. Aimed at promoting access to technology and digital literacy, these initiatives have sought to prevent info-exclusion and promote inclusion. The National Media Education Strategy is being developed, incorporating e-safety issues into the national curriculum. At present, while the media has reported on the national strategy, no official document detailing the plan has been released.

In summary, Portugal's MIL environment unfolds as a captivating narrative of concerted efforts from multiple stakeholders, each contributing a vital piece to the puzzle of media literacy. Their collective endeavours continue to empower citizens with the necessary skills for informed and critical media interactions, despite challenges like the decline of traditional media, the urgent need for MIL teacher training and the much-needed centred MIL strategy for the country.

## 4.2 MIL in the Portuguese Education System

Media education does not exist in Portugal as a separate curricular subject but is included within "Education for Citizenship," which also encompasses financial, road safety, and health education, among others (Jorge, Pereira and Costa, 2014). As stated by the

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<sup>55</sup> Estratégia Nacional de Educação para a Cidadania (ENEC). Available at: <https://www.dge.mec.pt/estrategia-nacional-de-educacao-para-cidadania>

<sup>56</sup> Perfil dos Alunos à Saída da Escolaridade Obrigatória - DGE. Available at: [https://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Curriculo/Projeto\\_Autonomia\\_e\\_Flexibilidade/perfil\\_dos\\_alunos.pdf](https://www.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Curriculo/Projeto_Autonomia_e_Flexibilidade/perfil_dos_alunos.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> Cultura Portugal. Publicada Lei N.º 74/2020 - Diário Da República. Available at: <https://culturaportugal.gov.pt/pt/saber/2020/11/publicada-lei-n%C2%BA-742020-diario-da-republica-eletronico/>

document produced by the Working Group on Citizenship Education, which was created to promote education for citizenship in Portuguese schools, the ENEC strategy greatly emphasises education and training as the foundation for the future of individuals and the country. The 'Perfil dos Alunos à Saída da Escolaridade Obrigatória' (Profile of Students Leaving Compulsory Schooling) document and the National Strategy for Citizenship Education (ENEC) are key components of the government's approach to education, addressing issues such as sustainability, interculturality, equality, identity, participation in democratic life, innovation, and creativity. These documents serve as a reference for curriculum development and guide the work of schools in responding to the challenges of the current society and economy, aligned with the development of 21st-century competencies. The ENEC emphasises the importance of promoting citizenship education to develop civic conduct that values equality, the integration of differences, and respect for human rights.

The working group conducted research and consulted with various stakeholders, including teachers, students, and representatives of civil society organisations. The goal was to provide recommendations on how citizenship education should be integrated into the curriculum, how it should be operationalised, how students should be certified, how teachers should be trained, and what content should be included in a citizenship education platform. In the document, media is cited only in the context of teachers' training and skills to be developed for Citizenship Education and Citizenship and Development. In this context, the skills to be developed are using technological media and Digital Platforms. Unfortunately, there is not much detailed information. Nevertheless, these are the main guidelines for training teachers in the country.

The Directorate-General for Education (DGE) executes policies related to the pedagogical and didactic components of preschool education, primary and secondary education, and extracurricular education. Its mission is to ensure the implementation of these policies, provide technical support for their formulation and evaluation, and coordinate the planning of various tests and exams. The DGE is responsible for developing curricula, coordinating and establishing exam norms, promoting research, investigating educational needs, and promoting international cooperation. The DGE also establishes the rules for the Essential Learnings, which are curriculum documents that guide the planning, implementation, and evaluation of teaching and learning in Portugal, to promote the development of competencies in line with the Profile of Students Leaving Compulsory Education. The Essential Learnings<sup>58</sup> outline the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students should acquire at each grade level and are based on a common curriculum. They are also part of the framework for external evaluation. The text describes the components of Essential Learning, which include structured disciplinary knowledge, cognitive processes for acquiring knowledge, and associated skills. Finally, the text notes that the Essential Learnings are part of the basic and secondary education curriculum and were developed with the Profile of Students Leaving Compulsory Education as a reference.

Among the Essential Learning curricula, we can find Curriculum Guidelines for Information and Communication Technologies, which establishes the ICT component of the first cycle of compulsory education, a cross-curricular integration area. The guidelines are organised into four domains and aim to develop digital skills in students progressively over the four

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<sup>58</sup> Aprendizagens Essenciais. Available at: <https://www.dge.mec.pt/aprendizagens-essenciais>

years of the cycle. The domains are Digital Citizenship, Research and Investigation, Communication and Collaboration, and Creation and Innovation. According to the curriculum recommendation, it is up to the teachers to plan the learning and teaching activities and to adapt them to the student's ages, interests, and school infrastructure. The aim is to integrate the learning from the ICT component with the rest of the curriculum.

The ENEC's strategy on education can be seen in the Essential Learning curricula in primary and secondary education. The strategy is implemented through a curriculum in Citizenship and Development discipline, which aims to tackle contemporary society's complexity and rapid transformation. According to the curriculum recommendations, schools should prepare students for citizenship demands. The school's role in constructing citizenship practices is enshrined in the Law of the Educational System principles, which state that the education system should contribute to the student's full development of personality, attitudes, and sense of citizenship. The National Strategy for Citizenship Education integrates competencies and knowledge, converging with the Profile of Students at the End of Compulsory Schooling and Essential Learning, aiming to form participatory, tolerant, and humanistic citizens. Again, according to the document, teachers play a vital role in preparing students for life as democratic citizens, requiring training, motivation, and experience in coordinating pedagogical teams.

In Higher-Education Institutions, many of the offers in education and training in MIL have witnessed a transition from the field of Education to Communication Departments in higher education institutions. This shift was influenced by the Bologna Agreement of the European Union and the historical involvement of media practitioners in Media Education projects. Many higher education institutions (HEIs) in Portugal, including Lusófona, ISCTE, Nova de Lisboa, the University of Algarve, and the University of Minho, have been identified as having cases similar to the situation described. It is likely that numerous other institutions across the country also face similar challenges and gaps in media literacy education.

Despite the limited availability of MIL programmes, a few universities have pioneered this initiative. The Universidade Lusófona offers a Master's in Media and Information Literacy and Digital Citizenship, providing comprehensive theoretical and practical knowledge in fields like Media Education, digital citizenship, and more. It is noteworthy that it is not explicitly intended for teacher training, but it is understood that some students might become teachers in the future.

The University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE) also offers a program in partnership with the fact-checking newspaper Polígrafo, with an emphasis on combating misinformation and fake news. Even though it doesn't directly cater to teachers, it offers professional development for this group. The University of Algarve includes a Media Literacy module within the Degree of Communication Sciences, focusing on a practical approach and community engagement projects. Historically, the Education Department offered this course but later migrated to the Communication Department.

Research centres such as the MILobs at the University of Minho also contribute to MIL. This observatory monitors and promotes Media Literacy activities across Portugal and abroad, starting as a collaboration between the Centre for Communication and Society

Studies and the former Office for Media Communication. Its origins are closely tied to the establishment of the GILM.

### 4.3 MIL in Teacher Training

In Portugal, to become a teacher, individuals must obtain a 'Licenciatura' degree (first higher education degree) and a master's degree for the first and second education cycles. For secondary school teaching, an extra year of training in schools is required, similar to an internship, but without remuneration. It is worth noting that the teaching profession in Portugal faces challenges as the average age of the country's 120,000 teachers is 52 years old, with only 1% of teachers under 30<sup>59</sup>. A lack of attractiveness in teaching can be attributed to relatively low pay. Finally, for Continuing Professional Development (CPD), there is support from the State through the Directorate-General for Education (DGE).

#### 4.3.1 Pre-Service Training

In Portugal, there is a significant lack of formal training in MIL tailored explicitly for future teachers. While a few programmes exist at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, they often focus more on technology than MIL and its related topics.

Examples of technological-centred solutions for education are variable. Among the institutions providing this type of education, the University of Minho offers programmes, such as Degree in Education, which offers the Technology and Communication Education module covering multiliteracies and critical approaches to Information and Communication Technology. Another Degree is in Basic Education, which also offers a module on Information and Communication Technologies in Professional Practice that follows the same principles as the module previously mentioned. Finally, the Master's Degree in Education offers an optional module called Intervention and Citizenship in Digital Environments, which focuses on designing and implementing digital projects for social and community interventions. The module aims to supply students with knowledge and skills in digital environments, social learning, digital literacy, inclusion, online collaboration, content curation, ethics, and entrepreneurship. The aim is to empower students to create innovative community interventions using digital technologies.

Also, in technology, the University of Algarve offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Education that cover related topics. The modules Information and Communication Technologies at School and Technologies, Didactic and Languages are integral parts of the Degree in Basic Education curriculum and the Masters in Language and Mathematics and Science. The Information and Communication Technologies at School module aims to enable students to use computer tools critically and responsibly in an interconnected world. It provides theoretical, technical, and practical knowledge of computer technology for future professional performance. The course covers information technology evolution, online and offline resources, computer applications, digital data representation, multimedia, interactive technologies, computer networks, and digital security. The Technologies, Didactic and Languages module focuses on developing proficiency in using ICT for educational purposes. It aims to discuss pedagogical issues, foster critical thinking, analyse and evaluate educational resources, and promote

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<sup>59</sup> Perfil de educadores e docentes do ensino básico, secundário e superior. EDUSTAT. Available at: <https://www.edustat.pt/detalhes-infostat?ID=4>

collaboration in creating instructional materials. Topics include the role of ICT in language teaching, best practices, and collaborative projects.

The University of Coimbra is one of the few universities that offers MIL-related courses to pre-service teachers. The Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences provides courses at the undergraduate level, such as the Degree in Educational Sciences, which offers modules that cover topics such as Trans Digital Literacy, Information and Communication Technologies, multimedia, media literacy and cyberbullying. The module called Digital Transliteracies focuses on using Information Technologies, and the teaching method involves concept presentation, exemplification, and practical tasks. The learning outcomes include improving digital literacy, creating content in digital formats, and using computer tools for scientific documents. Another Education and Media module uses a flexible methodology that combines expository moments with active student participation. The goals include understanding the impact of media, exploring different approaches in education and media, discussing media-related issues, and reflecting on the role of family, school, and education in promoting media literacy.

Also, in Education, we found an undergraduate programme (or Licenciatura, in Portuguese) provided by the University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE) in the School of Digital Technologies, Economy and Society in Sintra. The Bachelor's degree in Educational Digital Technologies enables students to design, create, and implement effective educational strategies using digital resources. It covers pedagogical knowledge, programming skills, multimedia expertise, and instructional planning for diverse learning environments. The programme also focuses on course development, digital resource creation, and integrating innovative pedagogical strategies with technology. Graduates are equipped to design training courses, develop digital resources, and implement effective teaching strategies in different educational settings. The one-year-old degree programme aims to supply schools with technicians to support and develop digital and technological transformation solutions. While the programme does not specifically train students to become teachers, students may pursue a teaching career after completing the mandatory full cycle of tertiary education. The programme is designed to provide students with a practical, hands-on learning experience. It offers a real-life approach, allowing students to interact in practical situations. As part of their coursework, students are tasked with designing projects that focus on creating solution-oriented approaches in school settings.

#### 4.3.2 In-Service Training

Diverse initiatives characterise in-service teacher training in Portugal, each uniquely bolstering digital skills and media literacy. One pivotal cornerstone of this training landscape is INCoDe.2030, a public policy initiative. Established in 2017, it has since become instrumental in advocating for the inclusion of digital skills, critical thinking, and social justice within the national education agenda. Its expansive offerings, spanning five distinct action strands, illuminate the multifaceted nature of digital competency. For instance, under the Professional Education and Training strand, the 'Digital School' programme offers an inspiring vision of digitally transformed schools, aiming to equip around 100,000 teachers with essential digital skills.

Parallel to the public sector's efforts, civil society organisations like the Literacy for Media and Journalism Association (ALPMJ) work to foster critical media interpretation skills and values such as impartiality and ethics. Through initiatives like the Literacy for Media and

Journalism (LMJ) project, ALPMJ enhances the media literacy knowledge base of preschool and primary school teachers. Their fruitful collaboration with the National Training Centre for Journalists (CENJOR) and the Ministry of Education is a testament to the power of cross-sector partnerships, having already trained teachers in 100 schools across the country.

Academic institutions also contribute to advancing digital and media literacy, although on a smaller scale. The University of Coimbra, for instance, has introduced courses like 'Strategies for Promoting Digital Skills in Learning' (EPCDA) and the Specialisation in 'Active Methodologies and Digital Educational Technologies'. These programmes go beyond transmitting technical skills, promoting a critical understanding of media's social and educational impacts, and fostering innovative, active teaching methods.

Complementing these efforts, Centres for Teacher Formation<sup>60</sup>, managed by the Directorate of General Education (DGE), offer mandatory training in digital skills for in-service teachers. Reflecting a trend towards viewing technology and digital competency training on par with subject-specific training, these centres align their curricula with the European Commission's DigComp.edu framework.

On a different front, the SeguraNet Project<sup>61</sup> – an integral part of the national cybersecurity strategy – leverages its broad consortium to imbue digital citizenship values into teacher training, focusing on safe and responsible internet use. Meanwhile, working from within the school system, the Digital Ambassadors<sup>62</sup> project strongly emphasises tailored technological adaptation plans for individual schools.

Despite these initiatives, key stakeholders in the country agree that there is a need for more robust formal assessments, engagement mechanisms, and practical applications in teacher training. The current landscape is largely influenced by the needs and interests of individual teachers, centres and schools, which underlines the importance of personal initiative in stimulating the learning and teaching of MIL subjects in Portugal.

## 4.4 Final Comments

The development of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in Portugal has seen a significant shift from Education Departments to Communication Departments in higher education institutions. This is attributed to structural changes in educational curricula and the historical involvement of media practitioners in media education initiatives. While this shift has widened the scope of MIL within higher education and beyond, it has limited the direct opportunities for teachers.

A practical approach to media literacy is seen in the national curriculum, with promising developments with the National Media Education Strategy and the renewed 'Media Education Benchmark for Pre-School Education, Basic Education and Secondary Education'. However, pre-service education in MIL for teachers in the country is still scarce and key stakeholders agree that there needs to be a better national strategy and

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<sup>60</sup> European Commission, Eurydice. Formação contínua de professores e educadores de infância. Available at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/pt-pt/national-education-systems/portugal/formacao-continua-de-professores-e-educadores-de-infancia>

<sup>61</sup> SeguraNetProject. Available at: <https://www.seguranet.pt/>

<sup>62</sup> Líderes Digitais. Available at: <https://www.seguranet.pt/pt/onde-estamos>

more public support to increase the availability of MIL programmes and provide student teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to discuss digital media in the classroom.

In comparison with initial teaching education, there are more opportunities for in-service training for teachers in MIL once they start teaching in schools. As we discussed, a few organisations and associations in the country have been involved in this kind of training, which is certainly an important advancement in the area. However, like in many other countries, these initiatives are usually isolated, with no effective integrated coordination on a national level.

In recent years, there have been several research studies conducted on MIL and correlated areas in Portugal, exploring various aspects of media consumption, digital literacy, and the impact of media literacy activities. These initiatives play a crucial role in advancing media literacy by assessing relevant activities and disseminating information. The country has a vibrant academic community and, according to our research, there is a genuine interest among scholars in areas such as education, communications, digital technologies, and media in advancing studies in MIL. However, the case for teacher training in this area is still lacking and underestimated, highlighting the limited investment and attention given to the topic, and overshadowing the potential benefits of adequately preparing teachers to navigate the evolving landscape of media literacy.

## 5. Belgium – Flanders

With over 11 million inhabitants, Belgium is the eighth largest country in the European Union<sup>63</sup>. Belgium is a federal constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system, where the decision-making powers are not centralised, but divided between the federal governments: 3 language-based communities (Flemish-, French- and German-speaking) and 3 regions (Flanders, Brussels Capital and Wallonia)<sup>64</sup>. With over 6,5 million people<sup>65</sup>, the Flemish-speaking community forms more than half of the total Belgian population, while approximately one-third are French-speaking people (Walloons), who live in the southern part of Belgium, and a small population of German-speaking people, who live in the Eastern part of the country. The language communities are responsible for education in the respective parts of Belgium. The Ministry of Education and Training is responsible for all stages of education and training<sup>66</sup>. In Flanders school governing boards hold the responsibility over one or more schools and have the autonomy to decide on their teaching methods, curricula, timetables, staff appointments and the like (ibid.). Financing is granted by the government (ibid).

The years 2019-2020 have been marked by a reform in teacher training courses in Flanders. As it is claimed in a governmental report compiled by the Department of Education and Training and other agencies related to education<sup>67</sup>, the reform strengthens existing teacher training courses in the field of subject content, teaching methodology, classroom management and dealing with diversity and the metropolitan context. Since 2019 there have been six types of teacher training programmes: an educational graduate course in secondary education, specifically for teachers for technical and practical subjects; an educational bachelor's degree in pre-primary education; an educational bachelor's degree in primary education; an educational bachelor's programme in secondary education, with a choice of two educational subjects; an educational master's programme in secondary education, with a choice of one or more subject didactics; an educational master's programme in the arts, with a choice of one or more didactics. Each of these teacher training programmes is aimed at a specific group of future teachers<sup>68</sup>. The reform has also included a transfer of the specific teacher training from the centres for adult education to the university colleges and universities<sup>69</sup>. The aim of the reforms was "to increase the quality of teacher education, including a strengthening of knowledge of the subject content to be taught, the necessary didactic skills, and classroom

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<sup>63</sup> Belgian Federal Government. STATBEL. Available at: <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/figures/key-figures-2022>

<sup>64</sup> European Union. Country Profile. Available at: [https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/country-profiles/belgium\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/country-profiles/belgium_en)

<sup>65</sup> Belgian Federal Government. STATBEL. Available at: <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/figures/key-figures-2022>

<sup>66</sup> European Commission. Eurydice. Available at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/belgium-flemish-community/overview/>

<sup>67</sup> Flemish Education in Figures 2020-2021. Available at: <https://publicaties.vlaanderen.be/view-file/48569/>

<sup>68</sup> Teacher and education staff. Available at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/belgium-flemish-community/teachers-and-education-staff/>

<sup>69</sup> Flemish Education in Figures 2020-2021. Available at: <https://publicaties.vlaanderen.be/view-file/48569/>

management<sup>70</sup>. Pre-service teacher education also includes a practical part in schools (or centres and institutions), whereby students become teacher-in-training (LIO)<sup>71</sup>.

In 2021 there were 16 university colleges and 6 universities providing tertiary education in Flanders, and the number of enrolments in teacher training in this period was estimated to be 24,005<sup>72</sup>. Governmental stakeholder responsible for almost all aspects of the Flemish educational policy is the Minister of Education.

Government only provides guidelines on the learning outcomes to be addressed by all schools, yet how they are met is the matter of a school or school network. In addition, there is a lot of competition between educational institutions.

## 5.1 MIL in Flanders

Media literacy in Belgium should be approached against the educational, political and institutional developments over the last 40-50 years (Van Audenhove et al., 2014), not least considering Belgium's transition from a centralised country. MIL is a language community matter in Belgium (Van Audenhove et al., 2018). Flanders has seen the rising importance of the role of MIL at regional as well as national levels over the past decades, with new organisations set up to promote aspects of media and digital literacy, such as the Knowledge Centre for Media Literacy (mediawijs.be) (ibid.), established in 2013 to stimulate and coordinate media literacy initiatives (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2016: 70). The Flemish media literacy field is decentralised, but collaborative and networked (ibid.). In 2013 over 200 organisations were working on media literacy, although in varying degrees and focus ranges (ibid.).

The key stakeholders in MIL in the Flemish Region (outside the formal educational system) are spread across six sectors: civil society, academia and public authorities, followed by audio-visual content providers, media regulatory authorities and journalist associations (ibid.). In 2016 there were 11 MIL networks in the Flemish Region consisting of a mix of national and international networks: Vlaams Steunpunt voor Nieuwe Geletterdheid; Mediawijs; The Network for e-inclusion for local authorities; The Commission for Youth Information; B-BICO: The Belgian Better Internet Consortium; Professional networks for local cultural workers; MEDEA: Media & Learning Association; Telecentre Europe; Insafe and INHOPE; No Hate Speech Platform Flanders; EU Media Literacy Expert Group (ibid.: 71). Multi-stakeholder campaigns (e.g., Safer Internet Day) or cross-platform campaigns that promote MIL awareness and skills through television, radio or other public broadcasting can be mentioned as significant actors in MIL education too (ibid.: 73).

In practice, however, it sometimes happens that a media literacy educational campaign in Flanders (e.g., De Digitale Week) and the French-speaking region (e.g., La Semaine Numérique) have little coordination between themselves (ibid.: 83). It is thus a language community-oriented approach that can translate into competitive aspects of MIL activities (data from the interviews). However, there are initiatives within Belgium that challenge this

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<sup>70</sup> European Commission, Eurydice. Teacher and education staff. Available at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/belgium-flemish-community/teachers-and-education-staff/>. (Last update: 9 June 2022).

<sup>71</sup> European Commission, Eurydice. Available at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/belgium-flemish-community/initial-education-teachers-working-early>

<sup>72</sup> Flemish Education in Figures 2020-2021. Available at: <https://publicaties.vlaanderen.be/view-file/48569/>

aspect already, e.g. EDMO (with an exchange between French- and Dutch-speaking communities as well as Luxembourg, which translates most inspiring educational tools that tackle disinformation into Dutch, French and English) or Betternet (an initiative between B-BICO, the Belgian consortium for a better Internet and the European Union, which provides educational resources in Dutch, French and German).

One other good-practice example in MIL education in the Flemish context is similar to the practice observed in Germany too when MIL campaigns target not one societal or age group, but more of them together<sup>73</sup>. In the Flemish context the MediaNest project (under the guidance of Mediawijs) for instance, has developed a public website that supports parents and grandparents in their interaction with children in relation to MIL topics (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2016: 84).

Furthermore, the Flemish Public Broadcaster (VRT) “has a specific mandate to focus on media literacy” by engaging citizens in more critical use of media, informing them about the various aspects of media use, or developing specific programmes for age groups (Van Audenhove et al., 2014: 4).

There are specific websites that have young generation as their target audience, e.g., watwat.be; a children’s channel with children appropriate information and news (9-12-year-olds); a newsnewsnews Instagram page (for 12–18-year-olds) - there are several among increasing ways that aim to spread MIL knowledge and competencies as well as trustworthy news among youth and children (data from the interviews)

## 5.2 MIL in the Flemish Education System

In the Flemish educational system MIL is approached as a transversal set of competencies, which are implemented to varying degrees as a cross-curricular objective.

In 2006 the Flemish Parliament started the discussions on media literacy and education, with a comprehensive Media Literacy Concept Paper adopted in 2012, signed by the Minister of Media and the Minister of Education and Youth, defining a transversal approach to MIL implementation (Van Audenhove et al. 2018: 60). The aim of the media literacy concept of the Flemish government was to emphasise “knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow citizens to deal with the complex, changing and mediated world in a conscious and critical way” (Lieten & Smet 2012). The Concept Brief Media Literacy (*Conceptnota Mediawijshheid*) defined media literacy, emphasised societal participation, citizen awareness, creativity and empowerment, rather than a protectionist approach towards media (Van Audenhove et al., 2018: 68-69). Furthermore, it described different institutions and actors as well as their role in MIL education (formal and informal) (ibid.). The paper also recognises the role of the public service media – the Flemish Radio and Television – which should also support media literacy in children, youth and elderly viewers as part of its educational mandate (ibid., supported by the data from the interviews). MIL education is seen as a transversal topic relevant to different fields and actors (ibid.: 69).

Due to the freedom of education in Belgium, the government provides guidelines, which then are ‘translated’ by the umbrella organisations into MIL goals, which furthermore

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<sup>73</sup> For example, youth, parents, teachers. See e.g., [www.klicksafe.de](http://www.klicksafe.de)

encompass what students should know about this topic from kindergarten age onwards (data from the interview). Schools and school networks in Flanders thus autonomously choose their teaching methods, teaching programmes, student evaluation and pedagogical projects (Van Audenhove et al., 2014: 5). “The Ministry of Education and Training develops the curriculum at the level of *learning outcomes*. It is up to the individual school or the network to reach these learning outcomes at specific stages of the education (ibid., emphasis in original, see also Vos 2013, De Craemer 2013).

A worthy to mention practice in the Flemish MIL field is the approach of a growing curve, which divides the acquisition of skills and competencies into phases within primary and secondary education. For example, in primary education questioning news is the start (see e.g., kritikat.be), which is then followed by a news creator role (learning how to be a journalist, collect information, choose stories to be printed, fact check, deal with deadlines, etc.) and opinion maker (how to form your own opinion, how to deal with other peoples’ opinions and different views) phases (data from an interview). In this context, the work of a non-profit Youth Press Organisation deserves a mention<sup>74</sup>.

### 5.3 MIL in Teacher Training

With the establishment of the Knowledge Centre for Media Literacy (mediawijs.be) in 2012, the Department of Culture, Youth, Sport and Media has primarily defined its task as a coordinating, knowledge building and transfer organisation within media literacy field, which serves as a platform to inform the Flemish government with statistics, creates collaborative networks within the field and serves as an intermediary organisation (Van Audenhove et al., 2018: 72-73). Mediawijs.be furthermore helps residents of Flanders and Brussels to use and understand digital technology and media actively, creatively, critically and consciously by regularly researching their main target audiences and adjusting their work accordingly (data from the interviews). Despite its significant and prominent role in the MIL field, as a non-profit organisation mediawijs.be depends on governmental funds, for which they need to apply and which results in varying financial capabilities annually. This financial uncertainty reflects on the teacher training scope that mediawijs.be can then implement during the funding period.

Adequate support to the MIL practitioners in the field also encompasses teachers and teacher educators. Since 2015 Mediawijs initiative “mediacoach” is directed towards school teachers, school principals, but also youth work and support as well as libraries and local authorities. The structure of the training encompasses a blended learning option (an online learning module on basic theory and coaching skills before each session), offline whole day meetings and sessions as well as a project that participants need to undertake during the training. The project is an important part of the mediacoach learning journey, as it encourages participants to set up a project in their own school, addressing the need of their school life and provides expert guidance along the way. At the end of such a professional development, a mediacoach becomes the central point of contact in the school or organisation regarding media literacy and the educational use of (digital) media, providing support, inspiration and guidance for colleagues (data from an interview). This combination of acquired knowledge and its transmission to peers is a central point of the mediacoach programme. Training for teachers, school principals and other stakeholders in

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<sup>74</sup> European Youth Press. Available at: <https://www.youthpress.org/member-organizations/belgium/>

education encompasses nine to ten sessions allocated across one school year. Monthly meetings encompass the following themes and experts on the topics: media literacy and media coaching; kids' media use; media, news and advertising; data literacy & privacy; media literacy policy; media production; online relations & relationships (including sexting and cyberbullying); balanced use of media; computational thinking; media and play. Mediacoach encompassed 3 groups in 3 locations with a total of 90 people in 2023. The certificate provided at the end of this coaching is not recognised by the government. The ultimate goal of the 'mediacoach' initiative is to provide knowledge, skills and practical competencies in building digitally inclusive local MIL support structures within educational institutions (and beyond). (Data from the interviews).

Even though such programmes like 'mediacoach' provide a non-governmental certificate, continuous professional development facilitates the governmental competence framework, which motivates teachers in acquiring competencies that support their students in reaching learning goals defined by the government.

The COVID-19 pandemic has facilitated the 'digital jump' (as it is named in Belgium), when schools received financial support to buy digital devices for pupils, resulting in every child (above 10 years old) having their own laptop in school (data from the interviews). This acquisition of devices has also increased in-service teacher attendance in continuous development courses (ibid.).

Due to its special role within the Flemish MIL education, mediawijs.be has created a curricular strand as an inspiration for teachers, with clearly defined learning goals and tasks varied across subjects and age groups. The resource is available in Flemish on their website for everyone together with the tools of how to meet the goals while applying provided resources. Mediawijs.be also conducts quantitative data collection studies for the continuous analysis of the MIL sector in Flanders (data from the interviews). EDMO BELUX, with its Disinfocheck initiative, has also created a repository of resources for specific age groups and on specific topics<sup>75</sup>, which should help teachers and teacher trainers in MIL education.

Inspiring and helpful such teacher training might be, it is difficult to assess in what ways and how often the MIL education practices have been implemented in educational contexts. In Flanders the freedom of education and relative autonomy of schools and universities leaves plenty of space for teachers to navigate the learning situations while achieving the policy guidelines and learning goals in MIL. It is democratic and creative, yet difficult to assess if MIL goals have been met in practice.

### 5.3.1 Pre-Service Training

In 2013, Ine Vos<sup>76</sup> claimed that while the mind shift towards the significance of media literacy has taken place on a societal level, it has not yet been implemented on a didactical level. At that time there were already a number of organisations and networks that focused on media literacy and teacher training programmes and institutions in Flanders.

There is no compulsory media literacy curriculum in Flanders, but it is in the educational plans as a guideline. Teacher training programmes develop their own curricula, without

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<sup>75</sup> Disinfocheck. Available at: <https://belux.edmo.eu/media-literacy/educational-tools/>

<sup>76</sup> Vos, Ine. 2013. Charting Media and Learning in Europe 2012. MEDEANet.

interference from governmental bodies (which can only give guidelines) under the prerequisite of the 'freedom of education'. As MIL is a transversal topic and institutions of higher education in Flanders are competitive in nature, it is hard to collect direct data about the MIL courses taught for pre-service teachers. Information collected through interviews revealed the existence of MIL topics in higher education, but the course titles did not hint specifically at MIL. From approximately 15 institutions providing BA (and several MA) programmes for initial teacher education, there might be either someone teaching a MIL-related course, or a working group formed to address the topic, or a one-day focus on MIL-related topics as a project day.

### 5.3.2 In-Service Training

Even though Flemish schools are autonomous to develop their plans and policies with regard to in-service training, they do receive governmental budget for in-service training (De Craemer 2013). Continuous professional development for in-service teachers (participation in workshops or pedagogical seminars outside of school) aims to ensure the optimization of their professional expertise, which in turn will affect the quality of education<sup>77</sup>. Yet continuous professional development depends on the initiative of teachers and schools, even though schools are required to construct an in-service training plan according to which they can allocate limited financial support for in-service teacher training (ibid.). The government distinguishes priority topics for in-service training yearly and this kind of training is free of charge (ibid.). An annual budget from the government is also dedicated to the network-based educational guidance services, which offer a number of in-service training initiatives (ibid.). Mentoring, coaching and cooperation practices within schools and among teachers also add to continuous professional development (ibid.).

In case of in-service training from the outside of school, there are 319 organisations (non-profit, academic, etc.) offering training courses<sup>78</sup>, which function according to the free-market principle and can tailor their courses according to requirements<sup>79</sup>. 12 of those organisations have media-related educational training: Bureau Jeugd & Media; Child Focus; European Schoolnet; Het Archief voor Onderwijs – meemoo; Mediaraven; Mediawijs; Mooss vzw; Nie normal digital; Onderwijscentrum Brussel; Rekker; Schoolmakers cvba; Slim Zoeken<sup>80</sup>. Klascement<sup>81</sup> also provides a database of educational materials for teachers.

Teachers within a certain school are also stakeholders in creating certain policies and ground rules that define school's action towards MIL-related aspects, e.g., when can pupils use a smartphone in school; what should be done when there is a victim of cyberbullying in school, etc. (data from the interviews). This is a localised approach, which can be exercised while including not only teachers and pupils, but also parents as stakeholders in such co-created 'school policy'. As one of the interviewees referred to the way media coaching 'lands' in the curriculum: as teacher trainers, we provide parts for the

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<sup>77</sup> European Commission. Eurydice. Available at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/belgium-flemish-community/continuing-professional-development-teachers/>

<sup>78</sup> KlasCement. Available at: <https://www.klascement.net/organisaties/nascholing/?hl=en/>

<sup>79</sup> European Commission. Eurydice. Available at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/belgium-flemish-community/continuing-professional-development-teachers/>

<sup>80</sup> KlasCement. Available at: <https://www.klascement.net/organisaties/nascholing/>

<sup>81</sup> KlasCement. Available at: <https://www.klascement.net/>

sandwich – bread, butter, cheeses and so on – in a form of examples and materials, but teachers prepare their sandwiches themselves, i.e., incorporate the materials and what they have learned into their teaching.

Mediacoach project ([mediawijs.be](http://mediawijs.be)) is supplementing teacher education and continuous professionalisation with the skills, competencies and practices in MIL that might not have been part of their pre-service teacher education several decades in the past. This continuous teacher education project is organised over the course of the year in three components: media literacy part, coaching part (doing together with colleagues and/or children), and a long-term sustainable goal of the project that accompanies teachers and pupils in the educational process in schools.

One of the recent surveys<sup>82</sup> in 2023, indicated that most schools provide training for teachers (66%), but that only in 42% of cases implementation was followed up in a classroom practice. Finding a balance between teaching and the use of digital resources was indicated as one of the biggest challenges. 65% of teachers indicated that digital teaching materials are shared between colleagues at school.

It is important to notice that continuous professional development can also happen in an informal mediacoach training, in a peer-to-peer manner during lunchtime in schools, e.g. 'media coffee', 'media pub' or 'soups and apps'. The advantage of such media training is that it usually stems from the needs of the team and caters to the future application of the learned skills in classrooms. This practice also acknowledges and highlights the existing local media talents within the school by asking them to be the media coach for a specific app or media practice within a school. As interview data shows, experience and fun factor is also a part of engaging and successful training. The informal interest and fun-driven peer-to-peer activities also beat the fear factor in teachers who might feel not knowing enough in the media field.

The Flemish public broadcaster has also come up with ways to facilitate education of society in MIL competencies through the idea of an *edubox* - a real cardbox with two hours of educational activities for schools in them accessible through QR codes, which lead to topic-introductory materials, videos, etc., on social media, disinformation, polarization, cyber security, AI, identity, democracy, mobility, etc. Such *edubox* can be used by a teacher in the classroom and there is no need for preparation in advance (data from an interview). The teachers find out about the *eduboxes* from peer-to-peer interaction or website, television or radio promotions and advertising<sup>83</sup>. Such a programme was not only a way to redefine the role of the public broadcaster by expanding its educational role, but also to take a proactive approach to strengthening media literacy across all generations (data from an interview).

Teachers do not get a rise in salary or other significant recognition for their continuous professional development in Flanders (data from the interview). The professional

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<sup>82</sup> Van Waeyenberghe, David. (28 April 2023). "Lerarenbarometer geeft trends en groot werkpunt weer" Available at: <https://schoolit.be/nieuws/platform/lerarenbarometer-geeft-trends-en-groot-werkpunt-weer/>

<sup>83</sup> More information about edubox and topics: <https://www.vrt.be/nl/edubox/catalogus/>

development of teacher educators working in the teacher training programmes is the responsibility of the respective institutions<sup>84</sup>.

## 5.4 Final Comments

In the Flemish educational system MIL is approached as a transversal set of competencies, which are implemented to varying degrees as a cross-curricular objective. The aim of the media literacy concept of the Flemish government is to emphasise knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow citizens to deal with the changing mediatised world in a conscious and critical way (Lieten & Smet 2012). Media Literacy is a language community matter in Belgium and its policies should be approached against the educational, political and institutional developments and reforms over the past decades.

Belgium-Flanders has seen the rising importance of the role of MIL at regional as well as national levels with new organisations set up to promote aspects of media and digital literacy and guidelines as well as learning goals set in educational plans. Even though the Flemish media literacy field is decentralised, it is relatively collaborative and networked. Multi-stakeholder and cross-platform campaigns promote MIL awareness and skills in various ways, including through public broadcasting (which also has a role in a public MIL mandate). Nevertheless, competitiveness among language communities, though, sometimes leads to valuable and highly relevant resources not being translated and shared among stakeholders in education in neighbouring communities.

Due to the freedom of education in Belgium, the government provides guidelines, which then are 'translated' by the umbrella organisations into MIL goals, which encompass what students should know about this topic from kindergarten age onwards.

Teacher training gained more significance in the light of the 'digital jump' during the COVID-19 pandemic, when technology was acquired for every school child from the age of 10.

It is important to notice that continuous professional development can also happen in an informal mediacoach training, in a peer-to-peer manner during lunchtime in schools.

There is no subject in MA or BA programmes that is solely devoted to MIL, yet the topic is scattered across disciplines and courses. Since Flemish institutions of higher education are competitive in nature, MIL knowledge and skills remain an internal and comparatively unmeasurable part of the curricular. Partly because of this reason, there is a considerable amount of ready-made materials that are scattered among web databases, ready to be chosen and applied in classrooms for in-service teachers. Materials, which need no prior education in specific MIL topics are the most common ones.

With numerous NGOs, non-profit governmentally funded organisations as well as an active public broadcaster (with age group targeted actions), the Flemish community in Belgium practises a holistic approach towards MIL as a salient societal, political, cultural and not only educational problem.

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<sup>84</sup> European Commission. Eurydice. Available at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/belgium-flemish-community/initial-education-teachers-working-early/>

Interviews with stakeholders in continuing teacher development indicated the factor of fear among teachers with all matters MIL related. Supporting programmes such as mediacoach (with expert training and practice-oriented application of learned materials in concrete school settings), edubox (ready-made concrete MIL related topic-oriented boxes for applying in lessons without prior preparation) or peer-to-peer exchange (like 'soups and apps lunch' or 'media pub') are good examples of structures that aim to overcome the lack of MIL training and empower teachers.

In Flanders the freedom of education and relative autonomy of schools and universities leaves plenty of space for teachers to navigate the learning situations while achieving the policy guidelines and learning goals in MIL. It is democratic and creative, yet difficult to assess if MIL goals have been met in practice. As MIL is a transversal topic and institutions of higher education in Flanders are competitive in nature, it is hard to collect direct data about the MIL courses taught for pre- and in-service teachers. Information collected through interviews revealed the existence of MIL topics in higher education, even though the course titles did not hint specifically at MIL.

## 6. Belgium – The German-Speaking Community

With over 11 million inhabitants, Belgium is the eighth largest country in the European Union<sup>85</sup>. Belgium is a federal constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system, where the decision-making powers are not centralised, but divided between the federal governments: 3 language-based communities (Flemish-, French- and German-speaking) and 3 regions (Flanders, Brussels Capital and Wallonia)<sup>86</sup>. The Flemish-speaking community forms more than a half of the total Belgian population (over 6,5 million people<sup>87</sup>), while approximately one-third are French-speaking people (Walloons), and over 79.000 of the Belgian population belongs to the German-speaking community<sup>88</sup>.

Due to the federal governance model, the three language communities in Belgium are responsible for education. In the small German-speaking population the Minister of Education is responsible for all levels of education starting with kindergarten onwards<sup>89</sup>. Similarly, to the rest of Belgium, the German-speaking community distinguishes three school networks: the Community Education System (GUW) – the official education system organised and financed by the German-speaking Community; the Officially Subsidised Education System (OSUW) – organised by the municipalities and financed by the German-speaking Community; and the Free Subsidised Education system – the system of schools organised by private boards and financed by the community (ibid.). The Parliament lays down the legal framework for all three school networks. In the two German-speaking community-financed networks, the school authorities enjoy a large degree of autonomy, particularly with regard to teaching and evaluation methods (ibid.). “Education in the three Belgian Communities is subject to the principle of “freedom of education””<sup>90</sup>.

In the school year 2020-2021, the German-speaking Community’s education system “comprised ten secondary schools and 57 primary school sites, serving around 9.400 students in total.”<sup>91</sup> In the school year 2022-2023, 2.637 children attended nursery school and 4.950 primary school<sup>92</sup>.

Collaborations with French-speaking Community in Belgium, Germany and Luxembourg are rather common due to proximity and socio-historical relations. French language as the first foreign language is often taught already in pre-primary school (ibid).

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<sup>85</sup> Belgian Federal Government. STATBEL. Available at: <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/figures/key-figures-2022>

<sup>86</sup> European Union. Country Profile. Available at: [https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/country-profiles/belgium\\_en/](https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/country-profiles/belgium_en/)

<sup>87</sup> Belgian Federal Government. STATBEL. Available at: <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/figures/key-figures-2022>

<sup>88</sup> Das Statistikportal der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens  
[https://ostbelgienstatistik.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-2569/4686\\_read-32765/](https://ostbelgienstatistik.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-2569/4686_read-32765/)

<sup>89</sup> European Commission. Eurydice. Available at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/belgium-german-speaking-community/overview>

<sup>90</sup> OECD Library. 1. The education system of the German-speaking Community of Belgium in comparison. Available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/a2ea446d-en/index.html?itemId=%2Fcontent%2Fcomponent%2Fa2ea446d-en>

<sup>91</sup> OECD Library. 1. The education system of the German-speaking Community of Belgium in comparison. Available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/a2ea446d-en/index.html?itemId=%2Fcontent%2Fcomponent%2Fa2ea446d-en>

<sup>92</sup> Schüllerzahlen 2022-2023. Available at: [https://ostbelgienstatistik.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-3115/5056\\_read-33848/](https://ostbelgienstatistik.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-3115/5056_read-33848/)

## 6.1 MIL in the German-Speaking Community

In 1992 media centre (*Medienzentrum*) in Eupen was established as a 'central library' for the German-speaking community in Belgium<sup>93</sup>. One of the media centre's aims is to provide the Community with information and possibilities to competently deal with media "by engaging with it early and in an age-appropriate way and by closely following developments" (ibid.). It takes all age groups into account and offers age-appropriate media activities as well as media workshops, collects information on all aspects of the media, networks with media experts in Germany and beyond, assists in the implementation of media projects, offers a film editing station for beginners (ibid.). The user fees are kept low in order to cater to the availability of services to every citizen (ibid.). It includes an extensive library, archive, DVDs, CDs and audiobooks as well as equipment lending services (ibid.).

One of the networked initiatives within the German-speaking Community is e.g., Betternet<sup>94</sup> - an initiative between B-BICO, the Belgian consortium for a better Internet and the European Union, which provides educational resources in Dutch, French and German.

## 6.2 MIL in the German-Speaking Community's Education System

In the German-speaking community, there is one higher education institution, The Autonomous University of East Belgium (*Autonome Hochschule Ostbelgien*), which offers courses in educational sciences (for kindergarten and primary schools), health and nursing sciences, financial and administrative sciences, etc.<sup>95</sup> Various courses are also offered for adults in the form of evening schools. Education in the German-speaking community consists of pre-primary education, primary education, secondary education and higher education. (ibid.) For longer-term studies at universities students from the German-speaking community go to universities in Germany or enrol at colleges and universities in the French or Flemish communities<sup>96</sup>.

The education portal of the German-speaking community in Belgium (*Das Bildungsportal der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens*)<sup>97</sup> acknowledges the significance of information and media competence and provides a database and a framework-oriented guide for teachers for the development of information and media literacy. The suggested lesson plans are divided by school levels, subjects and specific competencies, e.g., competence field information and research, production and presentation, analysis and reflection and the like<sup>98</sup>.

Since 2020 the association Speak Up has been formed under the roof of the Institute for democracy pedagogy (*Institut für Demokratie Pädagogik*) at the Autonome Hochschule

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<sup>93</sup> Das Medienportal der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens. Available at: [https://ostbelgienmedien.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-4434/7886\\_read-44477/](https://ostbelgienmedien.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-4434/7886_read-44477/)

<sup>94</sup> Betternet.be. Available at: <https://betternet.be>

<sup>95</sup> European Commission, Eurydice. Available at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/belgium-german-speaking-community/overview/>

<sup>96</sup> European Commission, Eurydice. Available at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/belgium-german-speaking-community/higher-education>

<sup>97</sup> Das Bildungsportal der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens. Available at: <https://ostbelgienbildung.be>

<sup>98</sup> Das Bildungsportal der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens. Available at: <https://ostbelgienbildung.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-2413>

Ostbelgien. Speak Up<sup>99</sup> has formed a network of people, organisations and institutions, which have MIL in their focus within the eastern part of Belgium, but also beyond including Italy, Germany, Belgium, Austria and Bulgaria (data from the interview). The incentive for the formation of this association was the rise in hate speech incidents and fake news in society. Synergic effect is the key for the association, so that the network members can share information, work on projects together, also multiply ideas and tools, telling what already exists and sharing information and tried out tools. Many institutions are lacking people with expertise, so this network helps and supports each other, “so that not everyone has to work on everything” (data from the interview). In this way the network works as a multiplier of already existing resources from a networked group of expertise. (Data from an interview). What the Speak Up association highlights is also that MIL education is (or can be) part of political education.

### 6.3 MIL in Teacher Training

The education portal of the German-speaking community in Belgium (*Das Bildungsportal der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens*)<sup>100</sup> acknowledges that good information and media literacy is the foundation for success in schools, opportunities in the workplace, and lifelong learning. It also emphasises that students should learn these competencies systematically and across all subjects from the first year of primary to the completion of secondary school.

In 2013, the Education Ministry has provided a guideline (*Leitfaden*) for information and media competence and a list of learning objectives for each stage of education as well as learning materials<sup>101</sup>. The special guide provides teachers with handouts and materials in the form of a database. Its structure follows the pedagogical principles of the framework plans<sup>102</sup>.

An agreement between the government and the municipalities of German-speaking Ostbelgien was made in 2018, according to which the municipalities took responsibility for ensuring that media and information literacy would be taught in all schools<sup>103</sup>. In addition, “a new media decree was adopted in 2021, which explicitly states that TV channels, radio channels and video sharing platforms must actively promote media literacy in the German-speaking community.” (ibid.)

Since 2020, annual Speak Up conferences serve as multiplier events directed towards different societal parts, including teachers, and help people to become critical citizens who are able to act when they see, e.g., misinformation. The participation in a conference is labelled as a teacher qualification event that the Ministry of Education acknowledges with the certificate. The conference has special theme-days (e.g., MIL, hate speech, fake news) and provides networking possibilities. Speak Up thus sees itself as reducing workload for teachers by suggesting tried out tools (data from an interview).

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<sup>99</sup> Speak up! Available at: <https://idp-dg.be/speak-up/>

<sup>100</sup> Das Bildungsportal der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens. Available via: <https://ostbelgienbildung.be>

<sup>101</sup> European Digital Media Observatory. Available at: <https://edmo.eu/country-profile/belgium/>

<sup>102</sup> Das Bildungsportal der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens. Available at: <https://ostbelgienbildung.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-2409/>

<sup>103</sup> European Digital Media Observatory. Available at: <https://edmo.eu/country-profile/belgium/>

### 6.3.1 Pre-Service Training

The curriculum in higher education institution that provides training for pre-school and primary school teachers in the German-speaking community is aimed at providing sound basic knowledge and professional qualification for its application in the profession<sup>104</sup>. Pre-service teacher education for other school levels is completed outside the German-speaking community. There is a pedagogical certificate of qualification to be obtained at the Autonomous University of the German-speaking Community, where subject-specific and subject-didactic courses are taught to pre-service teachers. In the academic year 2022-23 three courses could be found which had 'media' in its titles<sup>105</sup>.

### 6.3.2 In-Service Training

A decree from 1998 obliges all teachers to participate in regular further professional development training. Since 2010, the Autonomous University is responsible for the organisation and implementation of in-service training for teachers<sup>106</sup>. The annual continuing education and advisory services for staff in the teaching sector do not explicitly name competencies related to MIL, but do distinguish technical and didactic competencies to be promoted (ibid).

Each school in the German-speaking Community "can decide on three or four instruction days a year to dedicate to the collective professional learning of all staff"<sup>107</sup>

SpeakUp conference (organised by the Institut für Demokratie Pädagogik, Autonome Hochschule Belgien), offers a ministry acknowledged certificate for teacher participation, which is certificate supported and considered as a continuous professional development.

## 6.4 Final Comments

Media literacy in Belgium should be approached against the educational, political and institutional developments over the last 40-50 years (Van Audenhove et al., 2014), not least considering Belgium's transition from a centralised country. MIL is a language community matter in Belgium (Van Audenhove et al., 2018: 63), which has seen the rising importance of the role of MIL in regional as well as national levels over the past decades, with new organisations set up to promote aspects of media and digital literacy and guidelines and learning goals indicated in educational plans.

There is no subject solely devoted to MIL topics in the education system of the German-speaking community in Belgium, but the government provides guidelines and every teacher has to make it a part of their curriculum across all subjects and levels. Media centre (*Medienzentrum*) and the Institute for Democracy pedagogy (in the Autonome Hochschule Ostbelgien) are important stakeholders in the current landscape of MIL education in the Eastern part of Belgium. What the described Speak Up association

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<sup>104</sup> European Commission. Eurydice. Available at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/belgium-german-speaking-community/higher-education>

<sup>105</sup> Autonome Hochschule Ostbelgien. Available at: <https://www.ahs-ostbelgien.be/fachbereiche/bildungswissenschaften/>

<sup>106</sup> European Commission. Eurydice. Available at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/belgium-german-speaking-community/initial-education-teachers-working/>

<sup>107</sup> Quality and Equity of Schooling in the German-speaking Community of Belgium. Available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/a2ea446d-en/index.html?itemId=%2Fcontent%2Fcomponent%2Fa2ea446d-en>

highlights is also the fact that MIL education is part of political education and that in practice MIL education rests on tailoring offers to the current societal needs and providing training to the problems rather than their prevention. In the prevention work teaching personnel, media pedagogues, social workers, library workers, school principals, parents and children - all become significant stakeholders in MIL education.

## 7. Germany – Baden Württemberg

With over 83 million inhabitants, Germany is the largest country in the European Union. In Germany's federal Land Baden-Württemberg there are approximately 11 million inhabitants, making this Land the third biggest Land by geographical size as well as population.

Germany is a federal parliamentary republic with 16 federal states (in German: *Land*, pl. *Länder*), each of which has a Parliament, a constitution and a government presided by a Minister-President. This type of governance means that education in Germany falls under the administrative and political responsibility of each individual federal state and results in structural and content-related differences in teacher education between individual federal states (*Länder*)<sup>108</sup> (Vogt & Scholz 2020, Blömeke 2009). The educational standards and requirements are provided by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* (*Kultusministerkonferenz*).

### 7.1 MIL in Germany

MIL education in Germany is divided between three societal groups with the simultaneous and equal responsibility for accompanying navigation in the diverse media landscape: parents, teachers/ pedagogues and youth and children themselves. Since teaching MIL to (pre-service) teachers is very individual and depends on the teacher educator, the examples that rather aim to take the burden from the teachers' shoulders are inspiring in this respect. This focus shows that the responsibility for MIL education should not lie exclusively with schools and teachers, but should be an integral part of larger societal and children-parent learning. The mentoring programme, supported by the state through local media centres, e.g., offers peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities for students (having e.g. nine graders learn about MIL topics in special workshops and then go to lower classes during specific days to teach younger ones about what they've learned) or parents (through parent-media-mentors, who coach other parents in the school context). All of these practices are seen as simultaneous efforts to raise MIL in society as a whole and not only in teachers and teacher educators.

As current important actors providing updated information within the digital landscape with MIL supporting competencies are (in no order of significance):

For youth and children: [www.klicksafe.de](http://www.klicksafe.de); [www.handysector.de](http://www.handysector.de); [www.kika.de](http://www.kika.de); [www.schauhin.info](http://www.schauhin.info); [www.kinderfilmwelt.de](http://www.kinderfilmwelt.de); [www.fsk.de](http://www.fsk.de); [www.internet-abc.de](http://www.internet-abc.de); [www.kindernetz.de](http://www.kindernetz.de); [www.seitenstark.de](http://www.seitenstark.de); [www.fragfinn.de](http://www.fragfinn.de); [www.app-geprüft.net](http://www.app-geprüft.net); etc.

For teachers/ educators/ pedagogues: [www.lmz-bw.de/medienbildung](http://www.lmz-bw.de/medienbildung); [www.internet-abc.de](http://www.internet-abc.de); [www.klicksafe.de](http://www.klicksafe.de); [www.medianezz.de](http://www.medianezz.de); [www.mpfs.de](http://www.mpfs.de); etc.

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<sup>108</sup> Vogt & Scholz 2020; Blömeke, S. 2009. Lehrerbildung in Deutschland. In: PÄD-Forum: unterrichten erziehen 37/28 (2009) 1, pp. 5-8. Available at: [https://www.pedocs.de/volltexte/2011/3165/pdf/Bloemeke\\_Lehrerbildung\\_2009\\_1\\_D\\_A.pdf](https://www.pedocs.de/volltexte/2011/3165/pdf/Bloemeke_Lehrerbildung_2009_1_D_A.pdf)

For (grand)parents: [www.kindermedienland-bw.de](http://www.kindermedienland-bw.de); [www.klicksafe.de](http://www.klicksafe.de); [www.lmz-bw.de](http://www.lmz-bw.de); [www.internet-abc.de](http://www.internet-abc.de); [www.schau-hin.info](http://www.schau-hin.info).

## 7.2 MIL in the German Education System

The 2016 Education plan (*Kultusministerkonferenz*) defines six guiding perspectives (*Leitperspektiven*) to be applied in all schools, at all levels and throughout the curricular, and one of those cross-cutting perspectives is media education. The education plan of Baden-Württemberg acknowledges the importance of media education as an important component of general education:

The goal of media education is to empower children and young people so that they can meet the new demands and challenges of this media society with confidence and the necessary skills. This includes a reflective and responsible use of the media as well as a selection from the variety of media in school and everyday life. In order to impart these competencies, media education must be taught in an integrated manner (across various subjects). The basic fields of media education are information, communication, presentation, production, analysis, reflection, media society, youth media protection (*Jugendmedienschutz*), personal rights, copyright, licensing law and data protection.<sup>109</sup>

Since March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the education system in Germany. The switch to digital learning in 2020 and 2021 has brought both facilitation as well as challenge into the reconceptualization of MIL education. The processes triggered speedy acquisition of 'know-how' through peer-to-peer exchange and trial and error feedback loops as various virtual teaching and learning spaces were co-constructed in a very short period of time. Many media educators (also those interviewed for this project) have observed the process with awe, admiration and puzzlement at the same time while trying to find an answer to the question – what is actually needed for a successful MIL educational endeavour?

Two fields have been identified in the primary phase of the pandemic: lack of technical equipment together with the exposed digital divide within Germany and the insufficient preparation of teachers and educators with MIL competencies. Schools accelerated the adoption of digital technology, while educators dived into exchange. Peer-to-peer exchanges of information, skills, tips and shared materials have been on surge as educators have tapped into peer groups on social and digital platforms (e.g. Twitter, ZumApps), organised workshops (by various actors spanning from academic to civil society organisations) or commercialised platforms (with offers to share digital learning materials e.g. in video format, for teachers, e.g., [www.sofatutor.com](http://www.sofatutor.com)).

It is yet to be seen and compared (preferably on an international scale) as to how this gained media competence will be maintained integrated in the teaching and learning and how it will be developed further.

The end of 2022 and the first half of 2023 has been marked by a significant increase in discussions about the role of generative AI in learning and teaching contexts. In particular,

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<sup>109</sup> Zentrum für Schulqualität und Lehrerbildung Baden-Württemberg guide [https://www.bildungsplaene-bw.de/bildungsplan.Lde/Startseite/BP2016BW\\_ALLG/BP2016BW\\_ALLG\\_LP\\_MB](https://www.bildungsplaene-bw.de/bildungsplan.Lde/Startseite/BP2016BW_ALLG/BP2016BW_ALLG_LP_MB)

the spread of ChatGPT and its use by school children and students alike has caused quite a stir in the circles of stakeholders in education in Germany and beyond (data from participant observation): from school principals, teachers, parents to teacher educators and universities. Issues of information literacy, copyright, dis-/mis-/mal-information are at the forefront of the considerations regarding this tool (and emerging new ones). The approach sometimes varies among the stakeholders in education, ranging from a ban to critical use of it in institutions of higher education with the intention to raise critical analysis of generative AI with all its pluses and minuses.

*Landesmedienzentrum* (media centres of the Land, e.g., Landesmedienzentrum Baden-Württemberg, LMZ) together with the city and district media centres at around 50 locations in the state, forms the media centre network. This means that competent contact persons for media education are available directly on site throughout the Land. This network offers pedagogical as well as technical advice and further training, educational curriculum-related, professionally assessed media as well as support for school computer networks. In addition, the media centres offer trainings and courses (on-site and online or both) on MIL, media use in the classrooms, etc. The online portal [www.lmz-bw.de](http://www.lmz-bw.de) offers access to the services of the state media centre as well as a wide range of specialised information on topics related to media education. LMZ implements various educational programmes that strengthen media skills of children, youth, adults and senior citizens. Furthermore, LMZ mentoring programmes follow the peer-to-peer approach for endorsing MIL competencies: e.g., the student media mentor programme helps young people acquire knowledge and skills, which they then pass on to their fellow students. The parent media mentor programme pursues the same goal only from a parent perspective. LMZ also offers local contacts to competent and specially educated people for pedagogical advice or on-site seminars and training on MIL, with topics being chosen and pre-discussed with interested parties. The centres also offer educational curriculum-related, professionally assessed media (to be downloaded for use in educational contexts). In addition, they support media mentoring and peer-to-peer programmes in schools, among students, teachers as well as parents. In this sense the 'weight' of MIL education is distributed among many stakeholders and does not rest only on the shoulders of teachers and teacher educators.

One other network of MIL related knowledge is the registered German non-profit organisation "Gesellschaft für Medienpädagogik und Kommunikationskultur" (the German society for media pedagogy and communication's culture, GMK), which aims to advance MIL by bringing people from research and practise together for exchange of information in all fields of MIL education and across all ages.<sup>110</sup> GMK facilitates dialogue and transfer of ideas, critical engagement with the media, and in general sees media education as a cross-sectoral endeavour.

Featured projects in MIL in Germany: JIM-Studie; [medienundbildung.com](http://medienundbildung.com), [www.keine-bildung-ohne-medien.de](http://www.keine-bildung-ohne-medien.de), Kika.de, Seitenstark.de, Frag Fin oder Blinde Kuh for children, Safer Internet day, organised by [klicksafe.de](http://klicksafe.de); jugendschutz; Medienpädagogik Praxisblog; Zentrum für Kinderschutz; [jugendhackt.de](http://jugendhackt.de); [seitenstark.de](http://seitenstark.de).

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<sup>110</sup> Gesellschaft für Medienpädagogik und Kommunikationskultur. Available at: <https://www.gmk-net.de/about-gmk/>

### 7.3 MIL in Teacher Training

Across all of Germany there are 122 universities in total where future teachers acquire their education. The federal state with the majority of such universities is Baden-Württemberg, counting in total of 26 (Ramboll 2022: 9). Yet Baden-Württemberg is not only the third biggest federal state in size and population, but also the only *Land* where teacher training happens in both - universities and universities of education (*Pädagogische Hochschule*). This distinction between universities had historical roots and was and remains central to the differentiation of teachers according to levels and school types that they are prepared for (for more information, please see Lenzen 2012: 2). In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, stronger scientific orientation of all teaching professions took place, with the result that education of teachers for all school types was integrated into universities, and the universities of education – with the exception of Baden-Württemberg – were closed (Vogt & Scholz 2020; Blömeke 2009). It thus still remains in Baden-Württemberg, that teachers who study at the university of education, cannot teach at gymnasiums, while future teachers studying at universities do not receive sufficient pedagogical education. In other words, while universities pay more attention to the subject-specific education, universities of education pay more attention to the didactics and pedagogy of subjects.

As state employees, teachers in Germany undergo their studies and training in phases. The first phase encompasses university studies, which last 7 to 9 semesters, and end their usually two-subject based studies with the first state exam (or Master of Education). The second phase is called *Referendariat* and encompasses pedagogical-practical training as a preparatory service at schools. This phase is organized by *Studienseminar*, of which there is one in each Land. The third phase is further or advanced training in teaching profession.

Thus, teacher education in Germany is differentiated between school types (e.g., gymnasium, secondary school, comprehensive school, etc.), levels (primary, secondary I, secondary II), subjects (e.g., German, English, Math, Physics, etc.) as well as Lands and their administrative and political structures and responsibilities. Within universities, teacher education furthermore has been fragmented between usually three departments of subject-specific science (*Fachwissenschaft*), subject didactics (*Fachdidaktik*), and educational science (*Erziehungswissenschaft*) (Blömeke 2009). Differently than 'old' and established profession-oriented disciplines of medicine and law, which traditionally had their faculties, resources and responsibilities developed, teacher education has been called homeless and organisationally fragmented (Ramboll 2022, see also Prenzel 2019). In this complicated context, teacher education in Germany has been understood as transverse or being across.

Teacher education in MIL is seen as a crucial element in the process of bringing it into school practice. Especially in relation to MIL education in practice, there are a number of phrases that are used in media plans, course titles as well as research: digital media, media education, media pedagogy, etc. (see also Tulodziecki et al 2019). Despite the overlapping and sometimes maybe confusion with regards to the numerous terms that are used while discussing MIL, certain additional puzzlement arises when educators try to decipher the guidelines from state and federal states. Prosch identifies two of such questions: "What should teachers know in the area of media education? How can (pre-service) teachers be comprehensively professionalised in the area of media education?" (2021: 255).

Even though the discussion about learning with and about media spans at least several decades back, the “International Computer and Information Literacy Study 2018” showed that only about a quarter of teachers in Germany have acquired technical and didactic competencies of using digital media at schools during their own training; and only about a quarter of teachers regularly used digital media in the classroom on a daily basis (Fraillon et al. 2019).

Media education is not a separate subject in German educational structure, but is approached as an interdisciplinary cross-sectional competence to be acquired in the curricula of all subjects and throughout all phases of teacher training. In the strategy paper of the *Kultusministerkonferenz* “Education in the Digital World” in 2016, it is said that:

In their curricula and education plans and frameworks, starting with elementary school, the federal states include the competencies required for active, self-determined participation in a digital world. This is not implemented via a separate curriculum for a separate subject, but becomes an integrative part of the subject curricula of all subjects. Each subject contains specific approaches to competencies in the digital world (*Kultusministerkonferenz*, 2016: 6-7).

This strategic concept for the future development of education in Germany indicated that integrating the digital changes into the teaching and learning process is a complex undertaking to be planned, coordinated and implemented in several fields: (1) Education plans and the development of teaching, curricular developments; (2) Initial, further and continuing education of educators and teachers; (3) Infrastructure and equipment; (4) Educational media; (5) E-government and school administration programmes, education and campus management systems; (6) Legal and functional frameworks.<sup>111</sup>

The guiding strategy paper indicates the need for an inclusive, structured and comprehensive facilitation of media pedagogical competencies to pre- and in-service teachers. Media pedagogical competencies are understood as an interplay of multiple skills that are important for teachers and students alike in their private and professional digital media shaped worlds in order to learn to understand and use media in a reflective manner (Porsch 2022).

While this guideline sets a general goal, it does not set separate requirements for teaching and learning with media in a direct context, leaving the freedom of constructing specific curricular to teachers and teacher educators.

There is a large pool and a continuously growing number of educational offers on MIL in digital space. The field is varied and encompasses regional, federal state based, and in cooperation (e.g., with the European Union funded projects) created MIL facilitating resources. This also includes Open Educational Resources that more academic institutions lean into.

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<sup>111</sup>Kultusministerkonferenz (2016) Bildung in der digitalen Welt. Summary available at: [https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/PresseUndAktuelles/2017/KMK-Strategie\\_Bildung\\_in\\_der\\_digitalen\\_Welt\\_Zusammenfassung\\_en.pdf](https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/PresseUndAktuelles/2017/KMK-Strategie_Bildung_in_der_digitalen_Welt_Zusammenfassung_en.pdf)

In practice media education sometimes falls under the perception of technological knowledge of the use of media devices in schools. The often-used phrase 'learning with and about media' as well as an increasing use of such terms as 'critical media competencies' in governmental guidelines, significantly try to stir the understanding that media education encompasses technological and critical conceptual understanding of media messages too. The skill to use media for a responsible and participatory citizenship in democratic societies is the competence that is only establishing itself in the media education discourse in Germany (Pranaityte and Haus 2023).

In 2016 Land Baden-Württemberg has broken down the *Kultusministerkonferenz* media education perspective into the following topics: media society, media analysis, information and knowledge, communication and cooperation, production and presentation, youth media protection, informational self-determination and data protection and basics in information technology. These aspects have been anchored in curricular and can be viewed in educational plans of the individual subjects.

As one example of such intertwining of MIL education and education for Sustainable Development Goals could be found in a 6th grade religion class on the topic of the Christian myth of creation. The suggested tips for the lesson plan encompasses the various current media and popular culture consumption (video clip of one German pop song), the documentary on mass animal farming (film analysis), letter writing from the position of a hen to an animal farm owner (reading and writing literacies, metacognition, critical reflection and analysis), class discussions, relation of the Christian texts and their interpretation and the like.

In addition to the suggested lesson plans provided by the Land government, there are also other sources in school life that facilitate MIL competencies in school children and simultaneously 'cover' some aspects that the teaching staff may not know about or find no relation to their taught subject. School books could be defined as an additional MIL source. For example, in one English language book used in Baden-Württemberg, the topic of social media comes up. In the exercises and texts such topics as cyber-bullying, netiquette and other topics come up.

Textbooks form a particular aspect in the relationship between MIL education, stakeholder influences and teacher education. Textbooks often assume a guiding, lesson structuring and exercise function within the teaching and learning processes in schools. Furthermore, with an increasing shortage of teachers in Germany, it sometimes happens that teachers substitute subjects that they were not trained in. In such cases, the use of textbooks in classrooms gains even more significance in the process of mediating content. Yet, for example in Germany, the conceptualization and structuring of textbooks is not an entirely transparent process, as book publishing is a private enterprise.

Despite numerous emerging good practice examples, in many cases it is up to the educator to find them in the jungle of the Internet. A sustainable, up-to-date national, or better yet international, repository of inspiring good practice examples could be a very welcome addition.

### 7.3.1 Pre-Service Training

The federal and state governments initiated a coordinated effort to promote new developments for universities that train future teachers, called “*Qualitätsoffensive Lehrerbildung*” (QLB), which comprised two funding phases from 2014 to 2018 and from 2019 to 2023. It aimed to provide a competitive impulse for a qualitatively sustainable improvement for the entire process of teacher education up to the professional entry phase and continuing education in terms of content and structure. (Ramboll 2022). Selected projects were funded that ensured greater coordination of all stakeholders at a university who are responsible for training teachers. The ‘centers for teacher education’ and ‘schools of education’ have been founded in various federal states as cross-structures (*Querstrukturen*), which aimed to improve the cooperation between subject-specific sciences, subject-specific didactics and educational sciences. (ibid.). The continued existence of the QLB funded ‘centres for teacher education’ and ‘schools of education’ and their legal anchoring depends on many variables (Bohl and Beck 2020), which are still being defined in 2023. Yet the state funded projects as well as the visibility and recognition of the teacher education won through these two funding phases, has been highlighted in the reports in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

In addition to being the optimizing cross-structures at universities, which provide ‘institutional home’ to pre-service teachers studying across various subjects and faculties, the centers for teacher education and schools of education are also named as places of research. Research in the teacher education field is expected to add to the higher and more sustainable quality of teacher education (Ramboll, 2022: 28): the facts that research is conducted, that funds are acquired for it, adds to the visibility and recognition of teacher education within the universities and beyond (ibid.: 32). Sustainable research-centred structures in teacher education could furthermore support intra- and inter-university cooperation for interdisciplinary as well as international work. (ibid.: 36). Greater visibility and representation of teacher training related issues is also achieved through professorial and other high-ranking positions in committees, boards and other university structures (Ramboll 2022).

Since the state defined more cross-sectional topics that need to be part of educational plans, e.g., sustainability, diversification of learning materials, etc., several curricula offer a combination of them too. For instance, a currently in development lesson plan (data collected from participant observation in a teacher training conference in July 2023 in Marburg) included a creation of a food blog on sustainable nutrition, with a number of tips (e.g., to use Ecosia search engine) and testing of information literacy skills (e.g., doing research on the internet, comparing collected data in peer groups), included in the plan.

As one other good practice example, the creation of courses on additional qualifications could be identified. The so-called ‘Zusatzqualifikationen’ are understood as knowledge and skills that go beyond the regular teacher training. Heidelberg School of Education, e.g., offers one on media and information competencies for all interested students from the University of Education and University Heidelberg.

### 7.3.2 In-Service Training

Federal states legally specify that teachers are obliged to take part in in-service training. In most federal states this obligation *must* or *can*<sup>112</sup> be fulfilled during non-teaching time. Such workshops are treated as a personal investment of time and resources. Furthermore, to quote an opinion of one school director (documented in participant observation in October 2022, Karlsruhe), media competencies will not be tested in final exams, but Goethe will, so the aim of the teacher in this prospect is to prepare the students sufficiently in all matters related to Goethe first.

It might be concluded that in the situation of the current teacher shortage, underpayment and extracurricular activities<sup>113</sup>, teachers need primarily acknowledged and dedicated financial and time resources for further qualification of MIL competencies.

## 7.4 Final Comments

Across all of Germany there are 122 universities in total where future teachers acquire their education. The federal state (from the 16 of them varying in size) with the majority of such universities is Baden-Württemberg, counting in total of 26. Yet Baden-Württemberg is not only the third biggest federal state in size and population, but also the only *Land* where teacher training happens in both - universities and universities of education (*Pädagogische Hochschule*). This distinction between universities had historical roots and was and remains central to the differentiation of teachers according to levels and school types that they are prepared for. Within universities, teacher education furthermore is fragmented between usually three departments of subject-specific science (*Fachwissenschaft*), subject didactics (*Fachdidaktik*), and educational science (*Erziehungswissenschaft*) (Blömeke 2009). For these reasons, teacher education has sometimes been called homeless and organisationally fragmented. In this complicated context, teacher education in Germany has been understood as transverse (or being across).

Teacher education in Germany is differentiated between school types (e.g., gymnasium, secondary school, comprehensive school, etc.), levels (primary, secondary I, secondary II), subjects (e.g., German, English, Math, Physics, etc.) as well as Lands and their administrative and political structures and responsibilities.

Teacher education in MIL is seen as a crucial element in the process of bringing it into school practice. However, puzzlement arises when educators try to decipher the guidelines from state and federal states as it is not entirely clear what teachers are expected to know in the area of media education and how can (pre-service) teachers be comprehensively professionalised in this area.

Media education is not a separate subject in German educational structure, but is approached as an interdisciplinary cross-sectional competence to be acquired in the curricula of all subjects and throughout all phases of teacher training.

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<sup>112</sup> The wording depends on the laws of a specific federal state.

<sup>113</sup> European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Motiejūnaitė-Schulmeister, A., De Coster, I., Davydovskaia, O., et al., *Teachers in Europe: careers, development and well-being*, Birch, P.(editor), Publications Office of the European Union, 2021.

The strategic concept for the future development of education in Germany indicated that integrating the digital changes into the teaching and learning process is a complex undertaking to be planned, coordinated and implemented in several fields: (1) Education plans and the development of teaching, curricular developments; (2) Initial, further and continuing education of educators and teachers; (3) Infrastructure and equipment; (4) Educational media; (5) E-government and school administration programmes, education and campus management systems; (6) Legal and functional frameworks.<sup>114</sup>

In 2016 Land Baden-Württemberg has broken down the *Kultusministerkonferenz* media education perspective into the following topics: media society, media analysis, information and knowledge, communication and cooperation, production and presentation, youth media protection, informational self-determination and data protection and basics in information technology. These aspects have been anchored in curricular and can be viewed in educational plans of the individual subjects.

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<sup>114</sup>[https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/PresseUndAktuelles/2017/KMK-Strategie\\_Bildung\\_in\\_der\\_digitalen\\_Welt\\_Zusammenfassung\\_en.pdf](https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/PresseUndAktuelles/2017/KMK-Strategie_Bildung_in_der_digitalen_Welt_Zusammenfassung_en.pdf)

## 8. Conclusion

The main aim guiding TeaMLit research for this report was to carry out a thorough mapping, framing and analysis of current practices, barriers and opportunities in initial and in-service teacher training and continuing professional development in media and information literacy (MIL). This report examined five regions and countries: Ireland, Portugal, Belgium-Flanders, the German-speaking Community in Belgium as well as Baden-Württemberg Land in Germany. In the following table, gaps and opportunities as well as inspiring practices from analysed countries that enhance teacher training in MIL have been summarized from the conducted research and analysis.

**TABLE 1 MAPPING OPPORTUNITIES THAT ENHANCE TEACHER TRAINING IN MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY**

Disclaimer: Data in this table is summarised from conducting analysis in Portugal, Ireland, Belgium-Flanders, the German-speaking Community in Belgium, Germany's Baden Württemberg Land and worldwide practices and policies in MIL education and teacher training. The list is in no order of relevance.		
Nr.	Gap/hindrance in MIL education	Opportunity/ inspiring practice in MIL education
1.	Lack of financial resources dedicated solely to pre-service and in-service teacher education and continuing professional development of teachers and teacher educators in MIL.	Dedicated sufficient and stable governmental funds and administrative as well as institutional support in acquiring them and implementing MIL education.
2.	Overlooking the heterogeneity of the stakeholders in MIL education.	Considering a holistic and overarching list of stakeholders in MIL education, which includes not only pre-service and in-service teachers or their educators and continuous professional development trainers but also considers children, youth, parents, school principals, libraries, civil society, third-party funding bodies, public broadcasters, social media content providers, algorithms, national and regional authorities, (research) networks and associations with MIL related focus, transnational institutions and bodies, etc.

3.	Underestimating the complexity of MIL education.	The strategic concept for the future development of education in Germany indicated that integrating the digital changes (just digital changes, not to mention the broad scope of education in MIL) into the teaching and learning process is a complex undertaking to be planned, coordinated and implemented in several fields: (1) Education plans and the development of teaching, curricular developments; (2) Initial, further and continuing education of educators and teachers; (3) Infrastructure and equipment; (4) Educational media; (5) E-government and school administration programmes, education and campus management systems; (6) Legal and functional frameworks.
4.	Existing MIL guidelines that are not entirely clear about <i>what</i> teachers are expected to know in MIL and <i>how</i> can (pre-service) teachers be comprehensively professionalised in this area.	The practice of 'translating' governmental policies, guidelines and frameworks into practical implementation of them in educational contexts through institutions and personnel specifically working on this aim.
5.	Lack of MIL-related knowledge and skills among teachers, hesitation around media novelty.	<p>(a) Online databases with ready-made materials that respond to governmental guidelines in MIL and learning goals across different subjects and levels.</p> <p>(b) Acquiring MIL skills and knowledge in an informal event. For example, media-coach practice, peer-to-peer mentoring and knowledge and skill sharing among teachers on a local level through informative, yet engaging activities in schools like 'soups and apps lunch', 'media pub' or 'media café'.</p> <p>(c) social media as space of exchange; the sharing of already created materials for classrooms via special websites.</p>
6.	Lack of MIL-related knowledge and skills among children and their parents.	Mentoring practice: among school children (older to younger mentoring), parent-to-parent mentoring, supported by courses and training provided by professional media pedagogues coming from assessed institutional programmes (e.g., Land media

		centres in Germany, mediawijs in Belgium, Parent Zone in the UK).
7.	Lack of MIL-related knowledge and skills in a society as a whole.	Public broadcaster (television, radio) with a mandate to promote MIL through various programmes. Various websites, which offer materials to three societal groups at the same time, thus sharing the 'load' of MIL education among all stakeholders in MIL and not only expecting it from teachers and educators. The engagement of numerous stakeholders in campaigns, such as those seen in Ireland, Belgium and Germany has demonstrated an impact.
8.	Lack of MIL-related visibility and relevance in educational contexts, for example, institutions of higher education, especially those educating future teachers.	Acknowledgement through continuous and adequate financial funds and support for research into MIL in teacher training, which will subsequently add to the quality of MIL training, and stakeholders' presence in decision-making levels to keep the topic of MIL in teacher education on the agenda.
9.	Approaching MIL as a cross-sectoral endeavour.	Facilitating networks and cooperation between stakeholders in MIL education through projects, collaborative events and programmes, exchange and sharing of tried-out practices.
10.	Competition or centred interests within communities, institutions or nations.	Facilitate transdisciplinary and cross-regional (research) cooperation and networks through joint projects, events, research, tandem-teachings, etc.
11.	In-service training falls not in the working time of a teacher, but is treated as a personal investment of resources. In the current teacher shortage and underpayment <sup>115</sup> , MIL training might be seen as an extra burden on teachers' shoulders.	Teachers need primarily acknowledged and dedicated financial and time resources for further qualification in MIL.
12.	Lack of exchange between in-service teachers (with their 'on the ground' practices, feedback of what works and what not) and pre-service teacher education institutions.	Facilitating practice and knowledge exchange between school sector and teacher education institutions.

<sup>115</sup> European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Motiejūnaitė-Schulmeister, A., De Coster, I., Davydovskaia, O., et al., *Teachers in Europe: careers, development and well-being*, Birch, P.(editor), Publications Office of the European Union, 2021.

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