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Introduction

Our changing technological, media and social environments are providing new possibilities for everyone to participate in their society and engage with broadcast, digital and other media content and services. This can result in greater contributions to the digital and creative economies, reductions in social isolation, and improvements in civic, cultural, economic and democratic participation. However, these changing environments can also facilitate easy distribution and access to material likely to threaten social cohesion by inciting hatred of particular groups of people (e.g., on grounds of race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality), or promoting extremist views.

Media literacy is the key to empowering people with the skills and knowledge to understand how media works in this changing environment, to interrogate the accuracy of information, to counter unfair and inaccurate representation, to challenge extremist views and, ultimately, to make better informed media choices. This is especially significant for those who might otherwise struggle to navigate an increasingly noisy media landscape and sound-bite orientated society. In addition, media literacy can help people develop much-needed skills in the areas of creativity and of problem solving in technology-rich environments – an area that Ireland scores below average compared to other developed nations.[1]

It is against this backdrop that the BAI has developed this Media Literacy Policy. The policy has been developed as part of our statutory obligation to undertake, encourage and foster research, measures and activities which are directed towards the promotion of media literacy. To that end, the policy details a set of media literacy competencies, namely, the range of media literacy skills which have been identified by the BAI as essential for navigating the current and emerging technological, media and social environment. These competencies have been developed with a broad range of stakeholders, including audio-visual content providers, public authorities, academia, civil society organisations and those involved in online activities.

The implementation of the policy will be supported by the BAI, in a variety of ways including:

— the development of an annual media literacy work plan;
— the provision of support for the development of a National Media Literacy Network;
— the provision of ongoing support for media literacy through our core activities, including the complaints handling process, research commissioning, sectoral development activities and programme-making grants, awarded as part of the Broadcasting Funding Scheme.

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1 The OECD survey PIAAC adult skills survey assesses proficiency in three main areas: literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments. It defines literacy as "understanding, evaluating, using and engaging with written texts to participate in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential". Digital and print text are both included here.

Policy
Objectives

The overarching policy objective for the BAI's Media Literacy Policy and associated work plan is:

To empower Irish people with the skills and knowledge to make informed choices about the media content and services that they consume, create and disseminate.

Supporting this overarching policy objective are five strategic policy objectives:

Objective 1

To provide leadership and facilitate a coordinated approach to the promotion of media literacy in Ireland.

By its very nature, media literacy is a life-long learning journey that requires different stakeholders to provide support to people at different stages of their learning journey. No one organisation can achieve this in isolation.

This policy is anchored in the statutory requirements outlined in the Broadcasting Act 2009, but also strives to reflect the current thinking about media literacy at international level by organisations such as the European Commission, EPRA (the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities) and the EBU (European Broadcasting Unit). In addition, the policy and the framework for the cross-sector promotion of media literacy included within it, are designed to reflect the interests and activities of a growing number of stakeholders within Ireland.

Objective 2

To describe and promote media literacy among citizens, consumers and stakeholders, in a manner that is relevant and meaningful.

The term 'media literacy' has its origins in academia and is often understood differently by different stakeholders in different sectors, which can lead to a lack of clarity.

This policy, and the media literacy framework detailed within it, specifically avoids using a definition of media literacy. Rather, it focuses on creating a set of competencies, skills indicators and success indicators in language that will be widely understood by citizens, society and stakeholders from varying sectors and that will help to improve media literacy awareness and education.

Objective 3

To encourage a wide range of stakeholders to participate in the promotion of media literacy, in line with their specific business and strategic priorities.

Traditionally, the promotion of media literacy has fallen to the media industry and to the educational sector. However, just as the scope of media literacy is evolving, so too are the sectors with a role to play in promoting media literacy.

This policy and its associated media literacy framework are intended for use by a wide range of media literacy stakeholders in the manner that is most appropriate to their objectives and their work. It is designed to help stakeholders to recognise where they fit in, and how (and with whom) they might develop media literacy projects that will contribute to their own strategic objectives, while at the same time contributing to the BAI's overarching objective as outlined above.

Objective 4

To foster media literacy research and the development of a comprehensive knowledge base.

There already exists a significant amount of research in relation to various aspects of media literacy. This policy is intended to help stakeholders disseminate existing and future research to a broader range of stakeholders.

In addition, the policy is intended to be used to identify future areas for research, potential research partners, with the possibility of developing national baseline measurements for skills indicators.

Objective 5

To develop a policy that is strategically aligned to other key learning frameworks and policies.

This policy is designed to complement a range of existing formal and informal learning frameworks and policies such as the National Digital Strategy (DCCAE), the Digital Strategy for Schools (DES), the Further Education and Training Strategy (SOLAS), the National Skills Strategy (DES), the National Framework of Qualifications (QQI), the Junior and Senior Cycle Curriculum (NCCA), and the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act, 1989. Where possible, this policy uses similar language, to help maintain consistency, facilitate coordination, reduce fragmentation and minimise duplication.

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Understanding Media

A framework for the promotion of Media Literacy

The core of this policy is a framework for the promotion of media literacy. This framework consists of three core media literacy competencies and a set of associated skills and success indicators. This framework will be used to prioritise and organise the BAI's own portfolio of media literacy work. It is anticipated that this framework may also be useful in helping a wide range of stakeholders shape their own media literacy activities, in line with their own strategic and business objectives. As a result, the BAI has chosen to publish this document in the spirit of collaboration and in the hope that the framework will help all stakeholders recognise what role they can play and identify opportunities for collaboration.

By its nature, media literacy covers a very broad range of skills. Consequently, stakeholders are not expected to address each competency or its associated skills and success indicators. This framework is specifically designed to allow stakeholders to adopt a 'pick and mix' approach, where they can identify which media literacy skills most closely align with their core business and their own strategic priorities. Similarly, the competencies and their associated indicators are not in any order of priority and some indicators are applicable across multiple competencies.

The three competencies and associated skills and success indicators are set out in the following pages.

Core Competency 1

Understand and critically evaluate broadcast, digital and other media content and services, in order to make informed choices and best manage media use.

Skill indicators for individuals

— Recognise different content types, such as advertising, editorial, fact and opinion

— Understand the editorial processes involved in producing different content types

— Deconstruct media messages and recognise influencing factors[2]

— Analyse and assess the motivations of the content producer and the context in which the content is presented

— Evaluate content and services for truthfulness, reliability and value for money

— Understand the regulatory environments which apply to media content and services

Success indicators / collective impact

— Level of awareness of different content types

— Level of informed choice in relation to media consumption

— Level of awareness of advertising techniques and content across different media, including online

— Range and frequency of individual management of exposure to advertising

— Levels of awareness and reporting of stereotyping, bias, unfair portrayal, non-evidence based speculation, inappropriate content and context across media platforms and services

— Range of media sources used

— Frequency and range of incidences of members of the public seeking redress from the appropriate authority

2   Such as stereotyping, bias, unfair portrayal, inappropriate content or context, lack of evidence etc

Core Competency 2

Access and use broadcast and digital media content and services in a safe and secure manner, to maximise opportunities and minimise risks.

Skill indicators for individuals

— Effectively search for, find, navigate, and use media content and services

— Make informed choices about the value and protection of personal data, while using media content and services

— Use media content and services in a safe and secure manner, including making informed use of technical security features, restricting access and avoiding inappropriate and potentially harmful content

— Recognise how the infrastructure of the internet can influence media choices, patterns of behaviour and diversity of content/views

— Awareness of the legal and moral implications of the use of media content and services and technology

— Transact online in a safe and secure manner

— Recognise and understand the potential benefit and possible risks linked with emerging technology

Success indicators / collective impact

— Number of people accessing and using media content and services

— Frequency, depth and breadth of use of media content and services

— Range and effectiveness of techniques used to manage personal data and knowledge of the potential risks associated with how personal data is stored, shared and used

— Number of incidences of reporting inappropriate or potentially harmful content across media platforms and services

— Range and effectiveness of techniques used to manage the potential risks associated with media content and services, including child protection issues

— Range and effectiveness of techniques used to manage aggregated/moderated content

— Level of awareness of how competing views may be under-represented in an enclosed media system, for example social media

— Number of incidences of copyright infringement

— Number of incidences, frequency and seriousness of identity fraud

Core Competency 3

Create and participate, via media, in a responsible, ethical and effective manner, in the creative, cultural and democratic aspects of society.

Skill indicators for individuals

— Construct messages by using text, images, audio and code

— Create media content and products by producing text, images, audio, video and code

— Create content for public use (e.g. using creative commons licences)

— Publish, upload, share content online

— Compile and curate content

— Differentiate between and select the most effective services / platforms for public and private communication

— Understand and manage how networks are formed and function

— Know and respect digital rights and responsibilities

— Engage in online learning opportunities

— Express personal opinions and respond to the opinions of others

— Find and create opportunities to participate in the civic and cultural aspects of society

— Recognise, manage and appropriately challenge inappropriate[3] behaviour across all media

3 Abusive behaviour/content; Inappropriate or potentially harmful content; Negative stereotyping; Unfair portrayal; Bias; Lack of pluralism; Discriminatory content; Propaganda; Hate speech.

Success indicators / collective impact

— Level of resilience to negative behaviour and activities via media services, including online

— Levels of self-expression and democratic participation by number of citizens

— Level of creative engagement and output by citizens, across media platforms and services

— Level of cultural engagement and output by citizens, across media platforms and services

— Level of social inclusion, via media platforms and services

— Level of participation in peer-to-peer support

— Level of appropriate challenge to negative behaviour and activities, via media services, including online

Supporting the Media Literacy Policy

The BAI will support the implementation of this Media Literacy Policy in a range of ways, including, but not limited to the following:

Media Literacy Network

The BAI will work to facilitate the development of an Irish Media Literacy Network. This network would act as the main vehicle for cross-sector communication, collaboration and knowledge-sharing on media literacy topics in Ireland. Membership will be open to all media literacy stakeholders.

Publication of an Annual Work Plan

Based on this policy, the BAI plans to develop an annual work plan that is designed to address specific elements of each of the three competencies included in the framework within this policy. This annual work plan could include, among other things:

— The identification and prioritisation of annual media literacy themes;

— The alignment of some future BAI funded grants, where feasible, to the framework and priority themes;

— Development and delivery of key conferences, events and seminars, where appropriate.

Ongoing policy development and support

Media literacy is a dynamic subject area and is influenced by events and trends at both national and European levels. As such, the BAI will continue to review policy requirements and represent the Irish media literacy sector for international consultations, conferences and events.

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