Documenting Misinformation Policies In Europe: A Report

WP.2.1

OMEDIALITERACY Partners

The OMEDIALITERACY project brings together four leading European universities who contribute their expertise in the fields of political and communication science and journalism studies.

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DISCLAIMER

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SUMMARY

This report, "Report of documentation on policies in Europe concerning disinformation," is a comprehensive review of policies and regulations aimed at promoting media literacy initiatives and preventing the effects of misinformation from international organisations in the European Union and the four partner's countries of OMEDIALITERACY project: Portugal, Austria, the Netherlands, and Spain. A total of 86 documents were found, 45 of which were analysed in depth after applying the inclusion criteria. The results obtained on existing policies on this issue highlight the importance of media and digital literacy policies in the fight against disinformation and the promotion of critical sense among citizenship. These laws and strategies also encourage transparency and facilitate access to public information. They also highlight the need to include digital and media literacy in school curricula from an early age, as well as the promotion of projects in the media, libraries and other community centres. They stress the importance of establishing partnerships between governments, civil society, media and technology companies to carry out these actions. Although more studies will need to be carried out in the following years to check on the effectivity of the current policies and implementation of new ones.

KEY FINDINGS

- The global governments seem to have increased their efforts on implementing regulations regarding media literacy in the last five years and even more since the pandemic.
- The media and digital literacy policies analysed highlight the importance of applying these educational actions to combat misinformation and promote active and critical citizenship.
- The laws and policies on media and digital literacy in the countries analysed are passed to promote transparency and access to public information.
- The policies highlight the importance of including digital and media literacy in the school curriculum from an early age.
- The policies seek to encourage the creation of programmes and projects to promote media and digital literacy in different sectors of society, such as the media, libraries, and community centres.
- The policies reviewed highlight that collaboration between different actors, such as governments, civil society organisations, media, and technology companies, is crucial to promote media and digital literacy.
- The policy reviews find that more must be done to promote media and digital literacy, especially in developing countries and among vulnerable groups.
- There is still a general lack of procedures and working groups that evaluate the achievement and effectivity of the media literacy policies implemented.

1. Introduction

This report aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the formal policies and regulations that seek to promote media literacy initiatives and counter the effects of disinformation in the European Union, especially in the four partners' countries: Portugal, Austria, the Netherlands and Spain. This report is the result of the OMEDIALITERACY project (2023), funded by the EMIF and the Fund Partners, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, and the European University Institute. The main objective of this report is to provide an overview of the policies and regulations that have been implemented from 2018 to 2023 in different European countries to address the problem of disinformation and improve media literacy efforts to counter it.

The report begins with the description of the methodology implemented to search for the policies and regulations documents to be analyzed. After a briefly introduction of the results, the report follows by analyzing the global framework for combatting the effects of disinformation set up by the UNESCO and the European's approach on the same regard. We conclude the report by studying the specific case of the four partners' countries: Spain, Austria, Netherlands and Portugal while addressing the common working lines and the main differences while addressing the international guidelines and summarizing the main results.
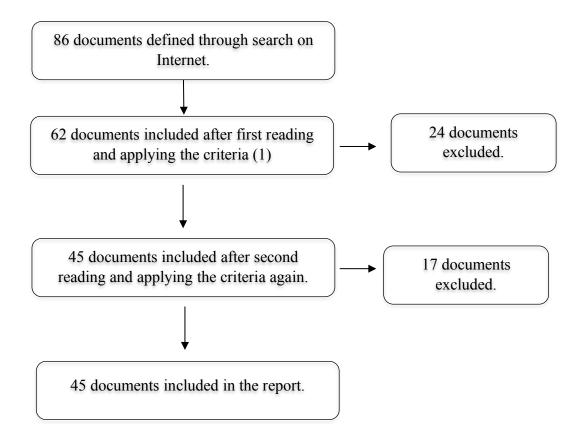
2. Methodology

We have reviewed of the Media Literacy and Disinformation policies and regulations of the European Union and each of the partners' countries. The policies references were either extracted from the previous literature review, manually searched on the governmental official websites or provided by the partners' research teams, following these criteria: policies and regulations that aimed to promote media literacy initiatives or prevent the disinformation effects and that were approved or valid for the period 2018-2023. The search was carried out on google using words such as "law", "policy", "policies", "misinformation", "disinformation", "Europe", "Austria", "Spain", "Portugal", and "The Netherlands". In addition, each partner searched the reference pages related to their disinformation laws and the coordinator also searched European and international bodies. We finally obtained 86 references, which were downloaded from the Internet to further analysis.

The research group carried out a first reading of all documents in order to learn about the policies on disinformation and media literacy being implemented in member countries. While the reading was in progress the research team applied the selection criteria. The inclusion criteria referred to (1) policies, regulations, plans, strategies, guidelines books, independent entities, etc. (2) published or promoted by a government

at either the global, European, regional or municipal level, (3) that included standards or guidelines for combatting and protecting the citizenship from the effects disinformation and/or promote effective media literacy interventions (4) either published after 2018 or currently working and (5) that were either available in English or allow translator programs. On the other hand, the exclusion criteria were related to drafts, summaries, reports, news releases, etc., that were published by a private company before 2018 or that were not currently applied and did not contain any considerations for the effects of the disinformation or media literacy initiatives.

After applying the criteria, 24 references were excluded. The 62 included references were read a second time and studied in depth for further analysis. The researchers reapplied the inclusion and exclusion criteria to the references and made a content screening. After careful consideration, 45 references were included in this report.

Figure 1. *Flow Chart of the Policies and regulations report on MIL.*

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3. Results

UNESCO started the decade by setting up a general framework for all the countries' governments to develop their own policies and regulations on tackling disinformation

and promoting effective media literacy initiatives. For the past five years and specially since the pandemic, the European Union and the members' states have been increasing their efforts on the task and developing a set of national and regional regulations to face the disinformation campaigns by setting a strong political framework, reinforcing the schools' CVs on Media and Information Literacy and regulating the media and journalism activities to promote citizenship free and safe access and usage of veridic information. The following sections analysed in detail some of those regulations and finally recommends the governance organisations to establish a methodology for further analysing the efficiency of the current policies and so they can be later replicated.

Table 1. *Main Results of the policies analyzed.*

Document Name	Territory	Main Results
Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers	Global	Set the basic CV for teachers on MIL competences.
MIL Policies and Strategies	Global	Guidelines on MIL policies creation for involved actors
Global Framework on MIL Indicators	Global	An innovative approach for promoting MIL on a multidisciplinary level. The concept of MIL cities.
Guidelines for Broadcasters on Promoting User-Generated Content and MIL	Global	Guidelines for broadcasters to promote MIL
Journalism, Fake News and Disinformation	Global	CV model for journalists to respond disinformation
Audio-visual Media Services Directive	Europe	All the member states will promote media literacy capabilities.
Action Plan against Disinformation	Europe	The objective is for the Union to become more resilient against disinformation.
Guidelines for the promotion and development of media literacy skills	Europe	Member States' reports should include media literacy measures pertaining to audio-visual media services
The Strengthened Code of Practice on Disinformation 2022	Europe	Signatories committed to regularly report on MIL good practices
Recommendation on promoting a favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age	Europe	MIL is key for empowering citizenship with the skills to recognise, use and value quality journalism.
Guide to human rights for Internet users	Europe	We have the right to access digital education
Recommendation on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership	Europe	States should promote MIL to enable citizenship access and use the content
Recommendation on rights of the child in the digital environment	Europe	States should introduce MIL competences on basic education CV
Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)	Europe	States should develop guidelines for teachers to foster digital literacy and tackle disinformation
European democracy action plan	Europe	Media literacy is a key pillar for sustaining democracy and citizens' rights
Europe's Media in the Digital Decade: An Action Plan to Support Recovery and Transformation	Europe	Media literacy is a key pillar for sustaining democracy and citizens' rights
Lucha contra las campañas de desinformación en el ámbito de la seguridad nacional	Spain	Media literacy, key tool on the fight against disinformation.
Estrategia Nacional de Ciberseguridad	Spain	Main goal is to promote digital literacy
Estrategia Nacional de Inteligencia Artificial	Spain	IA and MIL as a tool to reduce social divide
Plan nacional de competencias digitales	Spain	Including MIL competences in the education CV from the earliest ages
Ley de Transparencia, Acceso a la Información Pública y Buen Gobierno	Spain	Objective: to ensure the citizens' access to all the public information
Procedimiento de actuación contra la desinformación	Spain	The National Security Council is the organism in charge of implementing the protocol

Ley General de Comunicación Audiovisual	Spain	Promote MIL actions to educate and protect the citizens, the companies and all the stakeholders.
Proyecto de Ley del Cine y de la Cultura Audiovisual	Spain	Helping to fund cinema and audio-visual literacy research projects
Real Decreto de la ordenación y las enseñanzas mínimas de la Educación Infantil	Spain	The MIL process begins at pre-school
Real Decreto de la ordenación y las enseñanzas mínimas de la Educación Primaria.	Spain	Set the compulsory MIL competences in the basic CV
Real Decreto de la ordenación y las enseñanzas mínimas de la Educación Secundaria Obligatoria.	Spain	Set the compulsory MIL competences in the basic CV
Real Decreto de la ordenación y las enseñanzas mínimas del Bachillerato.	Spain	Set the compulsory MIL competences in the basic CV
Ley General de Telecomunicaciones.	Spain	Promote educational measures for training basic digital skills
Estratègia Digital de Centre (EDC)	Catalunya	The digital competence is the ability to properly search and process the information to transform it in knowledge
Plan de educación digital	Catalunya	Educational centres must promote digital competences
Consell Audiovisual de Catalunya (CAC)	Catalunya	The CAC aims to promote MIL on educational environments
Ley de creación del Consell del Audiovisual de la Comunitat Valenciana (CACV).	Comunitat Valenciana	The CACV aims to promote media education and help develop a sense of critical spirit
Consejo Audiovisual de Andalucia (CAA)	Andalucia	The CAA considers the digital and audio-visual education as a society challenge.
Desinformatie kabinetsbeleid	Netherlands	Strengthening the public debate and reducing the influence of disinformation
Handreiking omgaan met desinformatie	Netherlands	Guide for dealing with disinformation
Werkagenda waardegedreven digitaliseren: "Iedereen kan meedoen in het digitale tijdperk"	Netherlands	Digital literacy is a right
Lehrpläne – allgemeinbildende höhere Schulen	Austria	Set the compulsory MIL competences in the basic CV of secondary school
Lehrplan des Lehrgangs für Früherziehung	Austria	Set the compulsory MIL competences in the basic CV of pre-school
Audiovisuelle Mediendienste-Gesetz	Austria	The providers must provide its own offers to increase MIL on its website
Iberifier. Iberian Media Research & Fact-Checking	Portugal and Spain	Initiative by the European Union aimed at protecting EU citizens from online disinformation.
Referencial de Educação para o pré escolar, o Ensino Básico e Ensino secundário (em revisão)	Portugal	Set the compulsory MIL competences in the basic CV
Carta Portuguesa de Direitos Humanos na Era Digital	Portugal	Article 6. Right to protection against misinformation.
Lei 15/2022 de 11 de agosto	Portugal	Article 6. Right to protection against misinformation.
Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 40/2023, de 3 de maio	Portugal	National Strategy against Terrorism (ENCT), includes explicit references on online disinformation.

3.1. Media Literacy policies in the World

The XXIst century began with the development of information and communications technologies (ICTs) and the expansion of the digital world. At the same time, this process increased the concern for the effects of disinformation and the later phenomenon of 'fake news'. And ever since the beginning, UNESCO has led global efforts to combat those disinformation campaigns and promote media and digital literacy strategies to allow citizens worldwide to keep and enjoy their safety and freedom of speech. They did so by funding research on the matter and developing strategies and guidelines to help the member countries counter the spread of false information.

In this regard, UNESCO has been working on three interrelated approaches: education, policies and journalism/media. They first started in 2008 by developing the *Guidelines for Broadcasters on Promoting User-Generated Content and MIL* that aimed to assist broadcasters and media companies in the task of promoting media literacy to their audiences while also allowing the production of user-generated content (UGC) (Commonwealth Broadcasting Association & Scott, 2009). In the same regard, they published *Journalism, Fake News and Disinformation*, a handbook on journalism good practices that is part of the *Global Initiative for Excellence in Journalism Education*, which is a focus of the *UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication* (IPDC) and that serves as a model for teaching, practising and researching about journalism from a global perspective. This initiative (2018) tried to respond emerging problem of disinformation that had heavily confronted the activity of journalism and sought to be a manual adopted and adapted by all the member countries.

As for the education pillar, they designed the *Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers*. According to UNESCO (2011), "Enhancing MIL among students requires that teachers themselves become media and information literate" was the purpose of this publication: providing a Media Information Literacy curriculum and a competency framework for all governments and educational institutions to promote MIL tools and competencies among educators and, subsequently, the students.

In the political aspect, they developed the *MIL Policies and Strategies* guidelines book (UNESCO, 2013), which aimed to aid all the actors involved in articulating of more sustained policies and strategies to implement media literacy initiatives for fighting disinformation. More recently, UNESCO has been working on "MIL cities" concept. They sustain that the implementation of MIL initiatives must go beyond the institutions that had been traditionally involved in the process, such as schools, and journalists and so it needs to be extended to all the local actors: municipalities and networks of mayors, election commissions, transportation systems, film councils, media regulators, entertainment, health, art schools, etc. Hence, they developed the *Global Framework on MIL Indicators*(UNESCO, 2019) with the objective of setting a framework for

strengthening local governance and community cohesion, empowering citizens, stimulating MIL as a tool for intercultural and interreligious dialogue, building tolerance, countering hate and disinformation, enabling sustainable development and supporting each other efforts on the matter.

As mentioned, all these initiatives intended to set a global basis and a general framework for all the countries and communities to develop their policies and strategies to counter disinformation.

3.2.   Media Literacy policies in Europe

According to the European Commission (2020c), "media literacy includes all technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that allow citizens to access the media, to have a critical understanding of it and to interact with it" and agreed that "media literacy is critical to empower citizens in today's media environment and it should be supported across various programs and initiatives" In this regard, it is the European Union through the European Commission, the European Council, alongside the below organisations who are taking the UNESCO recommendations and guidelines for their adaptation to the European level. Following their lead, they also focusing on the three pillars mentioned above: education, policies and journalism/media.

3.3.   Political framework

As for the political approach, the European Union set up a general framework for the member states to adapt and develop their policies and strategies to counter disinformation. Hence, they first defined the *Action Plan against Disinformation,* whose prime objective was for the Union and its neighbourhood to become more resilient against disinformation. The plan (2018) explained some lines of action to support the fundamental pillars of the fight against disinformation, such as education and media literacy, journalism, fact-checkers, researchers, and civil society. The plan's objectives were also integrated into *Recommendation CM/Rec (2018)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership.* Its 5th article (2020d) entirely addressed the media literacy and education issues and determined the need for the member states to develop national policies and support media literacy networks. It also pointed out the recommendation to start including media literacy skills and tools in the national schools' CVs and to promote media pluralism and transparency, especially in the media sector educational content, so that would enable individuals to use information relating to media ownership, organisation and financing to understand better the different influences on the production, collection, curation and dissemination of media content.

This need for media literacy was reiterated in the *European democracy action plan* (2020c) and the *Europe's Media in the Digital Decade: An Action Plan to Support Recovery and Transformation*(2020a). Those documents resettled "media literacy" as a

key pillar for sustaining democracy and citizens' rights in the new era and for the economic recovery and competitiveness of the media sector. This way, the Commission agreed to increase its efforts to strengthen media literacy from various angles and to support national media literacy campaigns in cooperation with the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) and the Media Literacy Expert Group.

At the same time, they reinforced the state's individual actions with the *Guidelines of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive on the scope of Member States' reports concerning measures for the promotion and development of media literacy skills* (2023) that aimed to serve as a manual for the States to report and share their current best practices on media literacy.

On the other hand, the European Commission published the *Strengthened Code of Practice on Disinformation* (2022)*,* a set of commitments and measures for the signer's companies and institutions to establish self-regulatory standards to counter disinformation, ensure the transparency of political advertising, empower users, enhance the cooperation with fact-checkers and provide researchers with better access to data. Accordingly, the Commission claimed to be the partners' responsibility ensuring the effectiveness of their commitments' implementation. For this reason, they developed the Transparency Centre website, where the signatories' reports on how they are implementing the code are being continuously published. Its permanent task-force, composed of representatives of signatories, the European Regulators' Group for Audiovisual Media Services, the European Digital Media Observatory and the European External Action Service, and chaired by the Commission, is committed as well to "keep the Code future-proof and fit-for-purpose, by establishing a forum to review and adapt the commitments because of technological, societal, market and legislative developments."

3.4.   Education

As for the education approach, the European Council started by publishing *Recommendation CM/Rec (2014) 6 on a Guide to human rights for Internet users.* It serves as a manual for Internet users to increase their awareness about their rights, freedoms and limitations while surfing the net. Regarding media literacy, this first publication established the right to freely access digital education and knowledge to exercise people's rights and freedoms on the Internet. The Council (2014) agreed that accounting for the proper digital skills and tools would enable the population to critically analyse the accuracy and trustworthiness of content, applications and services.

That document was followed by *Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)7 on rights of the child in the digital environment* that aimed to bind instruments and standards and provide benchmarks for member States to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights and fundamental freedoms of children in the digital environment. In regard to media literacy, this document recognised the potential advantages of educational policies that

use digital networks to connect formal and non-formal learning environments while considering the situation of some children that may have little or any access to digital technology for socio-geographical, socio-economic or psycho-physical reasons (Council of Europe, 2018). Thus, they recommended all the states to include media, information and digital literacies in the basic education curriculums, starting in the earliest years, as well as to develop programs for promoting digital education among parents or carers as an essential means of creating a safer and sustainable digital environment for children and families.

Both of these recommendations were included in the most recent *Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)*(2020b) that addresses the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and presents opportunities for the education and training community, policymakers, academia and researchers while cooperating on the digital education. This plan requests a multidisciplinary approach to develop common guidelines for educators to foster digital literacy and tackle disinformation through education and training.

3.5. Media and journalism

When it comes to the media industry and the journalism world, the European Parliament approved 2018 the *Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD)(UE) 2018/1808* that established a general regulation concerning the provision of audio-visual and media services by the companies and institutions of the member states. The Article 33. Bis (2018) determined that all the member states would promote and act to develop of media literacy capabilities. This sentence was extended with *the Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on promoting a favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age* that aimed to encourage the states to adopt favourable regulatory and fiscal measures for media services and companies, whether traditional, digital-based or mixed. The 3rd article (2022) determined the importance of media literacy for empowering people with the skills and knowledge to recognise, use and value quality journalism. It also established the need for the development of quality MIL initiatives, which needed to be always supported by the member states. For the first time, it also recognised the need for a cross-sector response to draft a common framework to evaluate the actions' efficiency and study their replication in other levels and targeted groups.

3.6. Policies by countries

After carefully analysing the global and European set of policies and regulations regarding Media and Information Literacy, we are about to carry out an study of the regulations of the member states on a national and regional basis, focusing on the four partners' countries (Spain, Austria, Netherlands and Portugal) and searching for the common working lines and the main differences while addressing the international guidelines.

3.6.1. The case of Spain

Spain stands out as one of the European countries with better positioning in technological and digital adoption, especially among the younger population. Nevertheless, there is still a difference in the pace at which communities, companies and individuals are developing digital and technological skills, causing the digital or technological divide. Moreover, there are certain groups in a situation of risk of social exclusion that may suffer further digital divide and so they are especially vulnerable to the effects of disinformation.

In this regard, digital literacy has been defined as "the ability to locate, organize, understand, evaluate, and analyse information using digital technology" (Ministerio de Asuntos Económicos y Transformación Digital. Vicepresidencia tercera del Gobierno. Gobierno de España, 2020a) and so has been established as the more efficient tool for facing disinformation. For this reason, the Government of Spain and each of the Autonomic Governments followed the European guidelines to develop their own policies and strategies to counter disinformation.

Political framework

Firstly, the Government approved the *Ley 19/2013, de 9 de diciembre, de Transparencia, Acceso a la InformaciónPública y Buen Gobierno* that aimed to expand and reinforce the transparency of public activity, regulate and guarantee the right of access to information related to that activity and establish the obligations of good governance that must be fulfilled by persons who exercise public responsibility. Although this document does not talk specifically about the concept of disinformation, nor media literacy strategies to counter it, it does focus on ensuring the citizen's access to all the public information that may allow them to freely, fully and properly participate in our democratic society. It determines that "only when the actions of public officials are subjected to scrutiny when citizens can find out how the decisions that affect them are made, how public funds are managed or under what criteria our institutions act can we speak of the beginning of a process in which the public powers begin to respond to a society that is critical, demanding and which demands the participation of the public powers" (Jefatura del Estado, 2013).

Then, the National Security Council published the *Estrategia Nacional de Ciberseguridad,* whose main objective was to ensure the security and resilience of the digital networks and information and communication systems, guarantee their safe and reliable usage and protect the users. The 5th measure of working line 7(2019) established the need for promoting a critical spirit in favour of truthful and quality information that contributes to identifying false news and face disinformation campaigns.

This strategy was followed by the *Estrategia Nacional de Inteligencia Artificial* (2020a)and the *Plan Nacional de competencias on the digitales* (Gobierno de España)

that reclaimed the need for strengthening the digital skills of the population as the method for shortening the technological divide. The second document also agreed with the European recommendations to include digital and media literacy in the schools' mandatory curriculum from the earliest ages and reinforce those capabilities until adulthood. Both of these plans were included in the *España Digital 2026* action plan (2020b) that set a roadmap for the digitalisation of the country and established digital literacy as one of the four main social challenges, the other three the gender divide, the ecological transition and the territorial articulation.

That same year, the government published the *Procedimiento de actuación contra la desinformación* (2020). Although it was first designed to fight against the Russian disinformation campaigns, it further defined the general lines of action. It established the National Security Council as the organism in charge of implementing the protocol, following the 2018's *European Democracy Action Plan.* This document was reinforced with the *Lucha contra las campañas de desinformación en el ámbito de la seguridad nacional* guidelines book, which collected some civil society propositions for policymakers, government officials and organisations to prevent and combat disinformation campaigns that threaten national security. The 3rd chapter was entirely dedicated to media literacy and defined students, elders, educators, journalists and media and groups at risk of social exclusion as the main target of the digital and media literacy initiatives.

Education

In 2020, the Government of Spain recently approved the new education law *LOMLOE* and their subsequent decrees for the ordination and minimum teaching of compulsory education and baccalaureate cycles. As recommended by the Europeans, the media literacy competencies were included for the first time in the curriculum of these education periods. In this regard, Pre School was established as the stage where digital literacy begins(Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional. Gobierno de España, 2022). These first competencies entail, among other things, the access to information, communication and the creation of content through digital media, as well as the healthy and responsible use of digital tools. According to the text, the use and integration of these tools in classroom activities, experiences and materials can contribute to increasing motivation, understanding and progress in the acquisition of learning by boys and girls, and so it is the responsibility of the educational centre to establish the guidelines for the development of those habits of healthy use.

As commented, these competencies are meant to evolve and increase as the child grows and completes their compulsory education and the baccalaureate cycle. As there are obvious differences when it comes to the approach, the tools, the competencies and the objectives to achieve in every educational period, the decrees for the ordination and the minimum teaching of primary (2022b) and secondary school(2022c) and

baccalaureate(2022d)describe how the digital competence implies the safe, healthy, sustainable, critical and responsible use of digital technologies for learning, work and participation in society, as well as interaction with them. Moreover, this competence includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation (including programming), security (including digital well-being and cyber security related skills), citizenship issues digital, privacy, intellectual property, problem-solving, and computational and critical thinking. Again, the education centre that has to properly develop these competencies according to the content of the decrees.

On the other hand, Spain constitutes a decentralised state as some of the governance competencies are transferred to autonomies, for instance education. This means that every regional administration has the authority to develop its policies, always following the guidelines and previous laws of the central government. In this regard, most autonomies took the same main principles and included them in their policies. Although, some cases are worth a mention because of their double efforts to promote media literacy competencies, such as Catalonia.

The case of Catalonia

As for the eastern region, its regional government approved two complemental policies for sustaining the digital transformation of the education centres and ensuring the digital skills of the citizens. Accordingly, they published the *Estratègia Digital de Centre (EDC)*(2021) that defined the lines of action that make it possible for teachers, students and the centre organisation to achieve digital competencies. To achieve this digital competence, the EDC included all areas of the centre: organisational, methodological, curricular and communicative, which must necessarily be involved. This strategy works on building the basic digital capabilities and tools essential for fighting disinformation. However, the concepts of disinformation nor media literacy appear on the document.

In this regard, the Catalonia government had previously established the *Plan de educación digital 2020 – 2023* that aimed to contribute as well the development of the digital skills that citizens need to live and work in a society characterized by transformations and accelerated changes derived from the technologies themselves. With this Plan, Catalonia wanted to become a leading country in the educational use of technology for educational and social success and to equally improve the digital competence of students, teachers and educational centres in the framework of educational transformation. As for the media literacy actions, this plan agreed that "educational centres must promote development of the competencies so that the students become not only a critical and responsible user but also a creator of content, placing it as the protagonist of its process of learning. Likewise, this same role must be considered as the students are the transfers of digital knowledge to society, since they are often the digital literacy teachers of their families".

Journalism and media

In 2022, the Spanish government modified the former law of media and audio-visual communication and approved the new *Ley 13/2022 General de ComunicaciónAudiovisual* (Jefatura del Estado. Gobierno de España, 2022b) that regulates the activity of the audio-visual and media companies of the country. Some articles specifically mention the concept of media literacy, although it is the 10th article that focuses on the concept. Its main objective is to develop competencies, knowledge, skills and attitudes of understanding and critical assessment that allow citizens of all ages to use the media effectively and safely, access and critically analyse information, discern between facts and opinions, recognise false news and disinformation processes and create audiovisual content responsibly and safely way. Following the European recommendations, it also established the obligation for The Nacional Commission of the Markets and the Competence to elaborate and publish a report every 3 years about the MIL measures by the media services entities took to continuously evaluate their efficiency.

This law was to be reinforced with the new *Proyecto de Ley del Cine y de la Cultura Audiovisual*(2023)that aims to regulate the cinema industry and the audiovisual culture while achieving the appropriate level of transparency compatible with competition in the audiovisual sector, guarantying the full exercise of intellectual property rights by their owners and supporting the administrative to improve the promotion systems of the sector and the reach greater efficiency in the monitoring and evaluation of public policies on cinematography and audiovisuals, specifically in regarding the impact of the aid system. As for media literacy, the 29th article of the 9th section guaranteed the funds for promoting cinematographic and audiovisual literacy projects and creating of audiences. This aid may be granted to projects that promote cinematographic and audiovisual literacy, and increase citizens' knowledge and interest in European and Ibero-American audiovisual works, particularly among young audiences.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning the *Ley 11/2022, de 28 de junio, General de Telecomunicaciones*(2022a) that is the main policy that regulates the sector of electronic communications networks and services in a uniform and comprehensive manner. The educational efforts on strengthening the digital skills are meant to be reinforced by the sixteenth additional provision of this law that sets the promotion of educational measures that promote training in basic digital skills and abilities of people and groups at risk of digital exclusion and the ability of all people to make autonomous and responsible use of the internet and digital technologies.

In this last approach, it stands out also the work done by Iberifier, the Iberian Media Research & Fact-Checking(*Observatorio | Iberifier*, n.d.), a digital observatory in Portugal and Spain promoted by the European Commission, linked to the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) and coordinated from the University of Navarra. This initiative aims

to prevent and combat disinformation, promote media literacy, and strengthen the resilience of Spanish and Portuguese society against disinformation campaigns by monitoring disinformation, starting dialogues with online platforms, awareness-raising and education, international cooperation, research and analysis.

Autonomic regulations and institutions

On a regional basis, Catalonia, Andalusia and the Valencian Community have doubled the efforts for fairly regulating each country's media and audiovisual services and companies by establishing their self-regulatory Audiovisual Councils. Regarding media literacy, the *Ley 10/2018, de 18 de mayo, de creación del Consell del Audiovisual de la Comunitat Valenciana (CACV)* (2018)establishes in its 4[th]article the need for promoting the media education of the population and ensuring children's access, both in the school and in the family setting, to spaces and materials that can promote their knowledge of the media's language, the development of a sense of critical to its contents and the provision of tools to deal with new communication environments.

In the same way, the *Consell Audiovisual de Catalunya* (CAC) (2000)looks for the defence of the rights of information and freedom of speech, the pluralism, neutrality and honesty on information as well as the free competition within the sector. In terms of media literacy, they launched the program *EduCAC*, an educational program elaborated with the *Department d'Ensenyament de la Generalitat de Catalunya* that looks for the promotion of media literacy in educational and informal environments. As one of the main results of this program, they started the annual *EduCAC awards* that reward the work done by the teachers and the schools on media literacy.

In the same regard, the Andalusian *Ley 10/2018, de 9 de octubre, audiovisual de Andalucía* (2018) intends to carry out a comprehensive regulation of audiovisual activity in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia based on respect for rights and freedoms. Its 10th article recognises the right to media and information literacy as an instrument to increase, among other things, the critical capacity of citizens, a tool for equitable access to information and knowledge, as well as an instrument to contribute to the maintenance of communication media and free, independent and pluralistic information systems. Also, its 19th article aims to promote non-profit community audiovisual communication services throughout the Andalusian territory, especially in those areas where there is no commercial interest in providing audiovisual communication services or where there are no local public audiovisual communication services, as well as in those where they contribute to media and information literacy, training and culture.

Furthermore, the *Consejo Audiovisual de Andalucia (CAA)* (2005) works on the defence of the population's rights, freedoms and values in terms of public and private televisions and radios. Regarding media literacy, it agrees with the European and national regulations that consider digital and audio-visual education as a societal challenge.

Hence, they have created the awards *El Audiovisualen la Escuela* that stimulates a critical spirit and interest and reflection on current affairs among the youngest, in collaboration with film festivals for educational projections and in specific projects such as the decalogue *#PasaDelBulo y navega 16eguro*, which offers advice to avoid misinformation or the *Mayores con Wifi* workshop to provide the elders' tools on cybersecurity, Internet purchases, online administrative procedures, etc.

3.6.2. The case of Austria

Education

As the European Union recommended, Austria's government is also investing in counter-disinformation by developing a school curriculum that includes digital, media and information literacy competencies. Accordingly, "innovative technologies of information and communication, as well as the mass media, are increasingly penetrating all areas of life. Multimedia and telecommunications, in particular, have become determinants of the evolving information society." In this regard, they approved both the *Lehrpläne – allgemeinbildendehöhereSchulen* (2022) and the *Lehrplan des LehrgangsfürFrüherziehung* (2021), the laws that regulate the general early and secondary education cycles and establish the compulsory CV principles. Both laws agree that digital literacy skills must be considered in the classroom, and the didactic potential of information technologies must be harnessed while critically and rationally examining their mechanisms of action in the economy and society. The creation of independent work with information technology is to be encouraged to an age-appropriate extent. The criteria increase in secondary school to include the Digital World, the Role of Media, Truth and Manipulation.

Media and journalism

In the same line of action as the European Union, the Austrian government approved the *AudiovisuelleMediendienste-Gesetz* that regulates the media platforms and audiovisual carriers. Regarding media literacy, it establishes the obligation for the platforms to achieve a visible marking and design on the website homepage and the free and proper distribution of the information and corresponding offers from third parties to raise awareness among users and ensure their free, safe access and either provide its content regarding media literacy capabilities and tools on its website that must be easily and immediately found at all time.

3.6.2. The case of the Netherlands

Political framework

As in the cases previously analysed, the Netherlands government established a series of regulations and strategies to counter disinformation following the European's Commission and Council guidelines. In this regard, it approved the *Werkagenda*

waardegedreven digitaliseren:"Iedereen kan meedoen in het digitale tijdperk" (2021), a digitalisation working plan that aims to protect the fundamental rights and public values (security, democracy, self-determination, non-discrimination, participation, privacy and inclusiveness), to create a level economic playing field: with fair competition, consumer protection and broad social cooperation and to safeguard the public values in the digital domain. One of its prime objectives is to increase citizens' digital skills and knowledge, and they plan to do that by proactively approaching people who are not digital-literate and ensuring sufficient training provision that matches people's needs and technological developments. Targeting different domains, such as healthcare, agriculture, food, nature, and finance, has been set as one of the keys to achieving those objectives. Accordingly, students and young people seem to be another important target to focus the media literacy initiatives.

This plan was followed by the *Desinformatie kabinetsbeleid* (2022b) and the *Handreiking omgaan met desinformatie* (2022a), two sets of public guidelines and recommendations to face the disinformation effects. The first one seeks to strengthen the public debate by maintaining a diverse media landscape and increasing citizens' resilience by promoting public alternatives to online platforms. Accordingly, the content is key, so the guidelines also focus on the responsibility of social media carriers and content producers that may or may not help disseminate disinformation. In the same regard, the second document aims to give some legal and practical useful advice and tools to the officials, governments, and public organisations for facing disinformation and reducing its effects.

3.6.3. The case of Portugal

Political framework

Several studies have been carried out in the country to analyse Portugal's political and institutional framework regarding disinformation and media literacy actions to counter it. Although there is still an important lack of political frameworks that exploit *de jure* the concepts of disinformation and media literacy, the country has more recently started to establish the first national strategies to protect citizenship from the effects of disinformation. For instance, the *Carta Portuguesa de Direitos Humanos na Era Digital* (2021) and the *Lei 15/2022 de 11 de Agosto* (2022) recognise the right to protection against misinformation. Accordingly, the State must ensure compliance in Portugal with the *European Action Plan against Disinformation*, in order to protect society against natural or legal persons, de jure or de facto, who produce, reproduce or disseminate narratives considered to be disinformation.

The Ministers Council later approved the *Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 40/2023, de 3 de maio* (2023) that set a National Strategy against Terrorism (ENCT) and included explicit references on the fight against online disinformation. In this regard, the law aimed to coordinate all the necessary capabilities to combat hate speech and

disinformation in cyberspace, as well as in other common global communication spaces, making it impossible to use them for the radicalization, capture and recruitment of individuals and the dissemination of extremist propaganda.

Education

In terms of education, the Ministry of Education published *Referencial de Educação para os Media para aEducação e para o pré escolar, o Ensino Básico e Ensino secundário (emrevisão)* (2014) that aimed to allow children and young people to appropriate instruments for consciously using the potential of the media, as well as reaching awareness on the dangers to which they can be exposed through them, Within the framework of the educational system. This document sets the guidelines developing of media literacy skills and tools in pre-school, primary and secondary school.

4.   Conclusions

The new information technologies development has been on for a few decades now. Still, we can see how the concern for the effects of disinformation and the aim to promote media literacy actions to combat it is very recent. The development of social media and the incursion of the pandemic, and the fake-news phenomenon driven around it have certainly played a significant role in the awareness-raising process of international, national, and regional organisations about the importance of educating the citizens in a democratic and critical sense while evaluating the information. In this regard, UNESCO and the European Union have led ever since the beginning of regulating and implementing strategies for countering the disinformation effects, mainly from three approaches: general political frameworks, education and media and journalism.

Accordingly, education has seemed to be the key pillar that sustains the battle against disinformation campaigns, which has driven the implementation of the policies regarding the other two pillars. In the same regard, we have seen how most European countries, following the international recommendations, have started in the last five years to include media information and digital literacy competencies in the primary curriculum of compulsory education, starting at the earliest ages.

Nevertheless, it is UNESCO'S aim for the near future to develop a multidisciplinary approach to the fight against disinformation that involves not only the traditional partners related to media and education but all the public and private actors to promote media literacy in every sense and from a pluralistic perspective.

This report also aims to point out the need for all the governments and organisations involved to start investing in the development of procedures, strategies and independent analysis groups that evaluate the achievement and effectiveness of the policies and regulations regarding media literacy so they can study their replication in other levels and targeted groups. In this regard, more research must be done in the following years to analyse the evolution of the current policies and how the countries that are now lightly laggards increased their efforts to promote media literacy among European citizens.

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