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**An analysis on the media literacy efforts of
Finland, Sweden, and Norway.**

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Preface

In the aftermath of the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol, the nation's faith in democracy was eroded and societal cohesion was further fractured. The actions and emotions from that day and the years following were caused in part by beliefs in false information and provocative narratives. When measures were taken by the U.S government with the implementation of the Disinformation Governance Board, I became curious about the public opposition to this effort and concerned about the violent threats against proponents of this effort. I was also disturbed by the way the board was titled and introduced in a way that fed into the misleading narrative it was trying to mitigate.

My military colleagues in the information profession have written on the promotion of media literacy for service members to strengthen cognitive resiliency and mitigate the effects of disinformation. Again, I witnessed public resistance online that was rooted in harmful rhetoric and fueled by disinformation. I found this reaction concerning and wondered how other countries are getting media literacy promotion right.

I had the privilege of attending the Influence Conference 2022, hosted by the Norwegian Defense Research Institute. There, I listened to many professionals speak about the effects of disinformation and foreign influence. I decided then, that I would research three Nordic countries to discover measures taken to tackle the complex problem of disinformation and foreign influence. Residing in Norway, as a U.S. military exchange officer, I saw the opportunity to take advantage of the resources in Norway to support my research. I wanted to build upon the work of my colleagues and further develop my own knowledge in combatting disinformation for the sake of my own country. I love my country dearly and I have seen it united in times of adversity. I do not want to see it torn apart by divisions incited by disinformation.

Special thanks to my thesis advisor, Professor Paal Hilde for guiding me through this research journey. Researching three countries is a cumbersome task. His feedback, positivity, and reminder to "stå på" provided focus and contributed to the success of this thesis. Special thanks to the information professionals' community for recommending resources and sharing their knowledge on cognitive security. Lastly, there is a great deal of gratitude for my husband who has supported me, provided useful feedback, and entertained my enthusiastic discussions at home. Tusen takk for alt.

Sammendrag

Desinformasjon og skadelige narrativer utgjør en trussel mot demokratiet og nasjonal sikkerhet. Å forstå hvordan andre land fremmer kritisk medieforståelse og etter hvert styrker deres kognitive motstandskraft er viktig. Finland, Sverige og Norge har et rykte for utmerket kritisk medieforståelse. Denne studien har som mål å kaste lys over fremmingen av kritisk medieforståelse i disse tre nordiske landene. Dette er for å skape en bedre forståelse av hvordan disse landene implementerer sterke og systematiske tiltak for kritisk medieforståelse som blir akseptert av befolkningen. For å oppnå denne forståelsen vil studien svare på forskningsspørsmålet: "Hva er likhetene og forskjellene mellom programmene for kritisk medieforståelse i Finland, Sverige og Norge?"

For å besvare dette forskningsspørsmålet ble den kvalitative metoden valgt for denne avhandlingen i form av en case-studie. Studien sammenligner og evaluerer følgende aspekter for hvert land: historisk bakgrunn, politikk, roller, ansvar og implementering, finansiering og evalueringer. Gjennom evalueringen av disse aspektene identifiserte studien motivasjoner, metoder og andre faktorer som kan ha bidratt til de fremragende kritisk medieforståelseprogrammene i disse tre landene.

Gjennom analysen og diskusjonen av fokusområdene oppdaget studien hvordan kritisk medieforståelse blir fremmet for å fremme deltakelse og aksept av innsatsene for kritisk medieforståelse. Studien fant at nasjonalt drevet fremming av kritisk medieforståelse med en nasjonal politik/strategi sammen med en integrasjon av kritisk medieforståelse i den nasjonale læreplanen skiller seg ut som nøkkelfaktorer i den omfattende implementeringen av innsatsene for kritisk medieforståelse. Regjeringsdokumenter som ble evaluert i studien avslørte også et sterkt fokus på tverrdepartementalt og tverrsektorielt samarbeid for å fremme kritisk medieforståelse. Disse tre landene har vist at en fast forpliktelse til å koordinere, samarbeide og implementere kvalitetsutdanning innen kritisk medieforståelse er avgjørende for å forme et velfungerende demokrati og bygge en motstandsdyktig befolkning.

Summary

Disinformation and harmful narratives are a threat to democracy and national security.

Understanding how other countries promote media literacy, and eventually strengthen their cognitive resiliency, is important. Finland, Sweden, and Norway have a reputation for excellent media literacy. This study intends to shed light on the promotion of media literacy in these three Nordic countries. This is to create a better understanding of how these countries implement a robust and systemic media literacy efforts that is accepted by the population. To build this understanding, this study will answer the research question, *“what are the similarities and differences between the media literacy programs in Finland, Sweden, and Norway?”*

To answer this research question, the qualitative method was selected for this thesis in the form of a case study. This study compares and evaluates the following aspects for each country: historical background, policy, roles, responsibilities and implementation, financing, and evaluations. Through the evaluation of these aspects, this study identified motivations, methods, and other factors that may have contributed to the excellent media literacy of these three countries.

Through the analysis and discussion of focus areas, this study discovered how media literacy is promoted to foster participation and acceptance of media literacy efforts. This study found that nationally driven promotion of media literacy with a national policy/strategy together with an incorporation of media literacy in national curriculum stand out as key factors in the widespread implementation of media literacy efforts. Government documents evaluated in this study also revealed a strong emphasis on cross-governmental and cross-sectoral cooperation to promote media literacy. These three countries have demonstrated that a steadfast commitment to coordinate, collaborate, and implement quality media literacy education is paramount to shaping a well-functioning democracy and building a resilient population.

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1. Introduction

Disinformation in digital media is aimed to create division in democratic societies. Disinformation enhances the polarization between groups and utilizes emotional rhetoric to provoke anger. As a result, civil discourse, or respectful communication and understanding, is weakened. Trust in government is diminished and democracy is undermined. This threat to democracy weakens national cohesion and resolve, which are conditions advantageous to adversaries and threatens national security. Such threats must be met with serious actions from the government to preserve democracy and promote stability.

In the United States (U.S.), the government has acted to counter disinformation with media literacy training for military personnel as well as the establishment of the Disinformation Governance Board by the Department of Homeland Security. Such measures have been met with immense public resistance and malign propaganda. These reactions led to the resignation of the board's director and eventually the disbandment of the board. Yet, the threat remains and the need for a comprehensive counter-disinformation strategy and media literacy program is critical. The approach to implementing media literacy in the U.S. requires revision and the adoption of good practices from other western nations.

There are lessons to be learned from European countries that have successfully organized and implemented media literacy programs and strategy. Currently, Finland, Sweden and Norway top the media literacy index which is an annual index of European countries that measures their resistance to disinformation due to quality of education, freedom of the press, and high trust among citizens (Lessenski, 2023). Finland has seen great success with media literacy due to its extensive media literacy training in schools. In Sweden, the government has assigned the Swedish Media Council to coordinate and strengthen a national effort in media literacy to bolster the population's cognitive security. Norway, another Nordic country, has media literacy programs and supporting organizations in place. Though it does not have a national policy, it is worth assessing how a non-European Union (EU) country implements media literacy despite not having a national policy or EU oversight.

This study evaluates the following research question: *what are the similarities and differences between the media literacy programs in Finland, Sweden, and Norway?* This question was chosen because there is no comprehensive analysis of these three countries that studies the motivations, policy, and execution of media literacy efforts. To answer this research question, this case study will compare and evaluate the following areas for each country: historical background, policy, roles,

responsibilities and implementation, financing, and evaluations. These areas are structured as sections within the case study of each country. Each section is designed to build upon the previous section starting with historical background and concluding with evaluations of media literacy efforts. These specific sections were chosen because they share insight on why media literacy education has adequate support, how media literacy efforts are carried out, and whether these efforts are making any impact in building resiliency against disinformation.

The historical background section evaluates the motivations each country has for initiating media literacy programs for their societies. Historical events or an increase of threats have motivated policy makers, education leaders, and information professionals to act. The historical background section provides perspective on when and how these motivations occurred and the degree of tenacity. The historical background section describes the evolution of media literacy. Many of these programs were built upon previous literacy and media programs. The current programs have transformed to include digital competence and address new challenges with the evolving information landscape.

The policy section evaluates the laws, regulations, and framework that guides the implementation of media literacy efforts. Policy is the starting point to organizing roles and responsibilities, sourcing funding, and communicating the value of media literacy. It defines the current situation, establishes objectives, and provides direction for actors to follow. By evaluating policy, the study can explore if laws, regulations, and framework are necessary, helpful, or cumbersome in relation to the implementation. Do laws and regulation force the formation of comprehensive media literacy programs? Does policy provide the support required to keep media literacy programs active?

The roles, responsibilities and implementation section describe the internal framework of media literacy efforts. Media literacy is a whole-of-society effort that includes government oversight, non-government organizations and educational institutions. This section explores the correlation between the assignment of roles and responsibilities and the effective implementation of media literacy programs. Does assigning roles and responsibilities create accountability, reduce redundancy, and provide focus for the various sectors involved? This section will also explore the array of teaching forms used such as web-based games, videos, or lectures. Does having a variety of methods that reach most audiences help in creating a more resilient society against disinformation? This section will also include other cognitive security measures that mutually support media literacy to counter disinformation.

Creation of policy establishes the initial framework for media literacy programs. Financing is therefore required to implement these programs to reach a significant portion of society. This section evaluates the source and amount of funding provided to media literacy programs. The

amount of financing can dictate the level of sophistication in delivery methods. Demographics or skill level require a variety of education mediums to be effective. Some learn best via reading while others learn best by playing a digital game. Financing can also keep the curriculum interesting and up to date. It allows society to be better equipped to meet the most current challenges in disinformation.

The final section of each chapter will describe various evaluations on each country's media literacy based on research data conducted by other organizations. This section gathers results from testing and surveys conducted on populations within Sweden, Norway, and Finland. Some of these studies evaluate the correlation between receiving media literacy training and the ability to identify disinformation and demonstrate responsible digital habits.

The final chapter answers the research question by describing the differences and commonalities between the three countries based on the information from the previous chapters. This chapter will highlight significant commonalities that could be considered for replication in other countries. This thesis will assess the phenomenon of successful implementation of media literacy in society and the effectiveness of media literacy in developing resiliency against disinformation. To adequately research this phenomenon, a specific research method was selected which will be discussed in the following chapter. This will be followed by a chapter on the background of disinformation and media literacy.

2. Method

This chapter will focus on the research method and design used to plan and carry out the comparative assessment of Sweden, Finland and Norway's media literacy efforts that are in place and have yielded notable results. This includes the selection and critique of research method, collection method, implementation of analysis, source structure, and interview objectives. This chapter will conclude with a critique of the selected research method.

2.1 Selection of research design

The qualitative method was selected for this research. Qualitative research aims to understand the phenomenon with the analysis of text and speech instead of numerical or measurable data. The phenomenon is too complex to be reduced to numbers (Jacobsen, 2018, p. 24). Therefore, the comparative case study is the type of qualitative research for this thesis. A case study "is the

empirical inquiry of a contemporary phenomenon (e.g. a “case”), set within its real-world context—especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p. 240). The essence of a case study is to illuminate processes or programs, observe how they were implemented, and assess the results (Yin, 2014).

Interviews will provide an understanding of how media literacy is prioritized, implemented, and evaluated. The interviews provide internal perspectives about challenges, effectiveness, and future efforts. The interviews also led to additional literature that was valuable to the research.

The quantitative method was not selected because collecting quantitative data on each country’s efforts is a large endeavor. This would require surveys and testing in each country with various demographics, and personal information protection regulations. The quantitative method would take an enormous amount of time and bandwidth. Instead, this data utilized research already conducted in each country to determine effectiveness. The downside of utilizing completed quantitative research is that each country may measure different demographics or utilize different methods of evaluation. It is understood that a complete understanding into effectiveness may not be met. Nonetheless, the data will provide useful insight.

2.2 Collection of data

Data collection includes the identification and categorization of data relevant to the research. This included a phased approach to collecting data to set milestones and to allow appropriate focus on one set of information at a time. Collection of data was initially done by researching the government websites for media literacy for each country in this study. This was a starting point to understand the history, policies, and framework. These government documents outlined assignment of roles and responsibilities for media literacy within the government and other organizations. The documents also included self-audits that identified areas for improvement or sustainment. Assessment of these documents provided sources to subordinate or adjacent organizations.

The listed sources prompted interviews, or correspondence with researchers, from local universities such as the University of Uppsala in Sweden. This source specializes in the digital impact on education, critical thinking, and social science. This study utilized reports and findings from the university’s research projects on similar subjects to this study.

Contact information, for people involved with media literacy in each country, was given by colleagues or staff from Forsvaret Høgskole. This included representatives from the Norwegian Media Authority, the Finnish National Agency for Education, and the Swedish Psychological Defense Agency.

These sources were used to provide additional clarification on motivations and implementation of media literacy efforts.

A disadvantage with this collection process is that new and relevant data emerge continuously. This results in an abundance of source material which can be overwhelming to analyze. Therefore, boundaries were set to prevent over-expenditure of time and help to maintain focus. Labeling sources based on relevance helped prioritize the analysis of sources. This provided an opportunity to re-evaluate sources if time permitted.

2.3 Interview subjects and selection of interview respondents

Interviews were conducted for this study to gain further understanding of the phenomena beyond what is provided in the document analysis. During the process of document analysis, interview topics were developed to understand first-hand experiences with media literacy and to discover relevant factors that are not published. An interview guide was developed as a tool to develop questions and structure the flow of the interviews. The following topics were discussed in the interview.

- History and policy
- Implementation of curriculum
- Post training efficacy
- Societal factors

In this study, respondents were selected based on their experience with media literacy. No interviews were conducted with Finnish respondents because there was sufficient information given via e-mail correspondence from the Finnish National Agency for Education. Interview respondents from Sweden and Norway were:

- The Swedish Psychological Defense Agency: an agency that provides media literacy training for adults in regional areas in Sweden.
- Tenk: a non-profit organization that provides media literacy training in Norway.

2.4 Critique of method and challenges

A challenge with the qualitative method, in this case, is that you often find data that portrays the selected countries in a good light. Information on official websites is mainly subjective and rarely presents information that highlights the internal challenges or shortcomings for each country. This study was initiated based on the presumption that Nordic countries have performed well in implementing media literacy programs. This presumption was derived from data in the European Media Literacy Index. Additionally, in the professional information community, the Nordic countries

have a good reputation for developing resiliency against disinformation within their populations. Therefore, as the researcher, it is critical to mitigate confirmation bias throughout the process. Conducting interviews and sourcing quantitative data from third party research was essential. This method looked beneath the surface of the information from official websites. Periodic self-reflection was another tool utilized to mitigate confirmation bias and ensure objective reasoning was pursued as well as possible.

3. Definitions and background

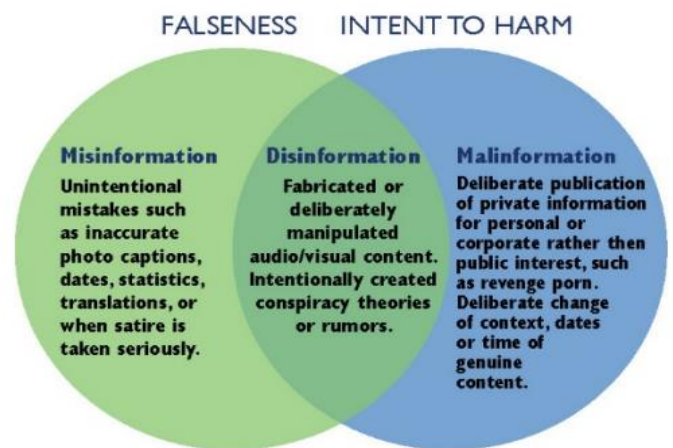
There are several definitions used by Finland, Sweden, and Norway to describe information concepts. In this thesis, USAID definitions for information concepts provided by USAID, and the EU definition for media literacy, will be used in this thesis. These definitions were chosen from these organizations because they are external to the three countries referenced in this thesis. They are both trusted organizations in the global community who employ professionals with extensive expertise in this field. The purpose of defining these terms is to provide the reader with a better understanding of what media literacy is and the challenges it aims to address. I will begin by defining misinformation, disinformation and malinformation to clarify the differences between terms as they are often misused or exchanged for one another. I will then define media literacy with a definition that relates closely to addressing the challenges of disinformation.

3.1 What is disinformation?

Harmful or false information in media can be categorized as **disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation**. **Disinformation** is false information that is disseminated with malign **intent** to mislead and manipulate audiences. Disinformation can be utilized by foreign or domestic actors to serve political, social, or economic objectives. Disinformation can be state sponsored or can be efforts by radical social groups or individuals. Often the source of false information is ambiguous and sometimes disguised as legitimate news sources. However, there are circumstances where disinformation is spread by politicians or notable figures to advance their personal objectives.

Misinformation is false information that is disseminated by users who believe the information to be correct. There is no intent to mislead or manipulate audiences. However, the effect of shared misinformation can be as dangerous as disinformation (USAID, 2021).

Malinformation is deliberate publication of personal and or private information with the intent to cause harm or manipulate others (USAID, 2021). Though the information is not false, irresponsible, or malicious dissemination of personal or private data can cause harm person, organizations, and governments. It can foster distrust and erode cohesiveness in society. Media literacy aims to teach responsible digital media usage and communicate appropriate reporting mechanisms.



Source: <https://internews.org/impact/disinformation>
Figure 1

In this thesis I will focus on the term **disinformation** in relation to media literacy. Disinformation is both false and harmful with serious implications for democracy and national security. Disinformation contains specific tactics, characteristics, and intentions that media literacy seeks to educate and expose users to. However, knowledge and skills gained from media literacy training are applicable to diminishing the effects of misinformation and malinformation.

3.2 The harm of disinformation

There are several ways that disinformation can be harmful. Currently, audiences are bombarded with a viral falsehoods, divisive narratives and media manipulation (Van der linden, 2023). Information is generated, processed, and spread to wider audiences at a faster rate in the current digital landscape. With disinformation, viral falsehoods gather more attention and trigger strong emotions which leads to more ‘shares’ of false information. Research suggests that false information diffuses faster, farther, deeper, and more broadly than true information (Vosoughi et al., 2018). When false information spreads, it can be challenging to address and correct the information before any negative sentiments or behaviors develop in audiences that believe the false information. The more the false information spreads, the more it is repeated. The more the false information is repeated, the truer it appears. This is known as the ‘illusory truth affect’ (Van der linden, 2023). If the audience perceives the false information to be true, then they will not find it wrong to share that information. Thereby continuing the spread of disinformation. When disinformation roots itself in society it can be problematic democratically, socially, and economically.

Disinformation can undermine the democracy in various ways. Falsehoods spread by disinformation can erode public trust in democratic institutions. Disinformation reduces the legitimacy and credibility of democratic institutions and its leaders in the eyes of the public (USAID, 2021).

Disinformation that accuses institutions/leaders of corruption, selfish motives, voter fraud, or incompetence can diminish trust in authority and promote volatile discourse in the democratic process. Town hall meetings where constituents are encouraged to have healthy and professional discourse with their elected officials can turn volatile when constituents believe disinformation regarding a government decision or policy. In extreme occasions, this distrust and anger towards elected officials can manifest into death threats or stalking.

Disinformation degrades information integrity in the democratic process. Voters rely on the media and published information to make informed decisions in the election process. Government public relations and journalists are no longer the only source for information. Disinformation floods the media landscape with falsehoods and convolutes the truth and thereby the integrity of the information. If politicians do not like what a journalist wrote or what an opponent claimed, the politician can simply label the claim “fake news” (USAID, 2021). This weaponization of the term, “fake news”, erodes the public’s trust in journalism and leaves them susceptible to poor journalism that is sensational and exciting. This dilemma leaves governments with a choice of reducing press freedom to control “fake news” via regulations or to allow liberal press freedom and risk the harmful spread of disinformation.

Disinformation increases social polarization between groups. Disinformation can reinforce stereotypes about people groups and create insular communities or “echo chambers” of similar values and experiences. These “echo chambers” can be found in social media environments where “beliefs and opinions are amplified and reinforced within a closed media system” (Van der Linden, 2023). Users within these “echo chambers” actively seek information and opinions that align with their pre-existing beliefs. They seek information that confirms their bias, and they avoid introduction to alternative information or viewpoints. Exposure to alternative content or being proven wrong can be unpleasant, so users remain in their “echo chamber” because it is comfortable and reinforces personal opinions. In extreme circumstances, these conditions can foster anger or hate speech and lead to violence. This isolation does not allow for a healthy social environment where individuals can learn and experience other viewpoints, histories, and facts. This social polarization prevents people from building understanding, respect, and cooperation which is vital for a vigorous and stable society.

Disinformation can bring harm economically. According to an economic report by the University of Baltimore in 2019, disinformation costs the global economy \$78 billion per year (Cavazos, 2019). Disinformation regarding company changes, financial advice, deaths of Chief Executive Officers, or

information tarnishing the company's reputation can result in share price loss. This also increases the company costs to counter the disinformation and mitigate the damage it caused.

Disinformation creates uncertainty for investors. According to the American Institute of Certified Personal Accountants, three in five Americans claim that false information has made it more difficult to make important financial decisions (Cavazos, 2019). In contrast, disinformation is a good investment for states who seek to undermine the stability of western nations. According to the European Commission, Russia spends at least €1.1 billion, or \$1.2 billion, annually on pro-Kremlin disinformation (Cavazos, 2019).

3.3 Disinformation as a tool for subversion

Disinformation is a low-cost/ high-payoff tool for state and non-state actors to promote instability in other countries. Disinformation is an indirect and covert means to weaken the targeted country, or society, by creating divisions; among the populations, against allies, polarizing different demographic groups and eroding the legitimacy of a government. States such as Russia have a long history of deploying disinformation to weaken opponents and create favorable circumstances.

In 1923, Artur Artuzov, head of the Soviet counterintelligence department, created the office for *dezinformatsiya*, or disinformation. The goal was to disseminate deceptive material to Western military intelligence services to deter and mitigate any military intervention by western powers (Rid, 2020, p. 26). Today, Russia targets citizens with disinformation and employs social media troll farms, such as the Internet Research Agency (IRA) in St. Petersburg, to enhance engagement and further fan the flames of harmful, false information. This agency created online personas that impersonated activists, or legitimate organizations on social media, to gain followership and spread divisive narratives on topics such as voter fraud and racism. Many posts were tailored to appeal to various demographics to gain attention, encourage re-posts, and influence behavior. One goal of the IRA was to dissuade black voters from participating in the election process. In the same vein, IRA created a fake republican party Twitter account, @TEN_GOP (Tennessee GOP) to spread disinformation about voter fraud (Rid, 2020, p. 406).

Those are some of many ways Russia spreads disinformation online to erode democracy, destroy credibility of governments, and spark polarization with the political objective to set unstable conditions in Western nations. Consequently, western nations are distracted with their internal social unrest and reduce attention on Russia's malign activities. The Russian state can also utilize disinformation to erode the public will of Western nations to intervene in areas or situations that are part of Russian interests. These are also just a few examples of how any nation-state can employ disinformation to meet their political and military objectives.

3.4 The challenge with disinformation

The challenge with disinformation is that it is difficult to contain and counter. Many forms of disinformation are permitted under the freedom of speech so long as it is not hate-speech or promoting violence. Information is disseminated rapidly online and has the potential to reach large audiences. Once disinformation has reached many and is repeated, its potential to be mistaken as truth is increased, as previously mentioned, with the “illusory effect.” Legitimate journalists or government agencies can provide fact checking to mitigate the effect. However, the cyclic rate of news reporting moves audiences along to the next news story and does not afford audiences the opportunity to self-correct disinformation they had believed to be true. Fact checking also requires audiences to already trust the source of said fact checking. If disinformation has already convinced citizens not to trust their media and government, then the government and society must utilize other measures to counter disinformation. Measures such as media literacy is key to building cognitive resilience and safeguarding people from the influence of disinformation.

3.5 What is media literacy?

Media literacy has various definitions, or scopes, in different countries and organizations. Some countries view media literacy in a broad scope that includes digital competence, or the knowledge required to access, evaluate, analyze, and create digital content. Other countries, narrow the scope to focus on the skills of identifying false information, determining credibility of information, and encouraging responsible digital engagement. This can be described as “source criticism” or “civic online reasoning.”

In this thesis, the following definition, provided by the EU, will be utilized:

“Media literacy refer to skills, knowledge and understanding that allows citizens to use media effectively and safely. In order to enable citizens to access information and to use, critically assess and create media content responsibly and safely, citizens need to possess advanced media literacy skills. Media literacy should not be limited to learning about tools and technologies, but should aim to equip citizens with critical thinking skills required to exercise judgement analyse complex realities and recognize the difference between opinion and fact.” (The EU, 2018)

Media literacy is not a panacea for disinformation, but it can serve as a fundamental skillset, or defense, that shapes healthy attitudes, and approaches, on how to consume and share information. For those who are already deeply involved with consuming disinformation, media literacy can serve

as a therapeutic intervention. Media literacy also gives a user the understanding of the structural techniques of manipulation that reside in disinformation.

Understanding these methods provides a basic competence about disinformation. However, the brain favors experience over analysis to develop quality competence and resiliency against disinformation. Humans learn best through practical application to develop habits and mental shortcuts to recognize and deflect disinformation (J. Sundstrand & P. Noren, personal communication, August 24, 2023; Van der Linden, 2023, p. 209). General understanding of disinformation coupled with practical application of instruction is what media literacy provides.

Media literacy training has shown to improve people's resistance to disinformation, as a vaccine boosts the immunity of a person against harmful contagions. However, the effects of media literacy are not enduring. Like any physical inoculation, there is a decay process of psychological immunization provided by media literacy. For users to maintain resiliency, they require re-occurring training to remind them of manipulation tactics and introduce new information to better equip those users when evaluating information (Van der Linden, 2023, p. 222).

Not everyone needs to be trained in media literacy to create a herd resilience or "herd immunity" against disinformation (Van der Linden, 2023, p. 229). However, media literacy needs to be of high quality with effective delivery methods or mediums. It must be available to a variety of demographics. It must gain access to persons in remote areas or those highly susceptible to misinformation due to isolation.

As with vaccines, or mandatory training, a person may not want media literacy training because they lack desire for training or have a pre-conceived bias that the government aims to control information. Therefore, media literacy must be delivered in forms that are appealing to users combined with a narrative that diffuses negative bias towards media literacy.

Just as audiences are wary of the government's role in discerning disinformation, audiences do not trust companies, such as Facebook, to be the "arbiters of truth." In fact, automated fact checking tagging, provided by Facebook, can unintentionally reinforce falsehoods instead of disarming them. This occurs when key words in the fact-check headline trigger associations and emotional ties the user may have with the false information (Van der Linden, 2023, p. 77). Instead, media literacy can equip audiences with critical-thinking tools prior to the exposure to disinformation. Media literacy can help persons decide for themselves and remove the notion of the government or private company discerning truth for them.

3.6 Evolution in trends addressed by media literacy education.

Technological advances in artificial intelligence (AI) can shape a users' experience by directing specific information related to the user's interests or online habits. This limits a user's interaction to diverse sources of information. Manipulated images created by new software or images produced by AI are more sophisticated and difficult to recognize. Media literacy must include the use and misuse of such technologies to increase user awareness (MoEC, 2019, p. 24).

Mediums and habits that users employ to receive information are ever-changing. Users are utilizing mobile technologies to produce and consume information (MoEC, 2019, p. 25). Content producing sites, such as TikTok or Instagram, make it easier for users to create influential content from anywhere, at any time, and reach many followers. In the recent Israel-Hamas war, young adults preferred to get their news from TikTok on the conflict because the platform described events much faster than conventional media (Viken, 2023). This fast-paced, free-flow medium can expose users to unverified or misleading content.

Media literacy plays a role in addressing social and cultural trends associated with media use. Hate speech and harassment must be addressed in media education to mitigate spread of such content, develop responsible media habits, and encourage healthy civic participation. Media literacy needs to be current with the various social and cultural trends to foster inclusivity and prevent social polarization (MoEC, 2019, p. 26). The following chapters will discuss how media literacy plays an important role in addressing these challenges for Finland, Sweden, and Norway. These chapters will discuss how media literacy is implemented, how it is sustained, and the outcomes of these efforts.

4. Finland

Today, Finland is viewed as a leading example to follow for promoting media literacy. Finland has a long history of developing media literacy education as a comprehensive and cross-sector program. Finland also plays a leading role in media literacy cooperation among European countries. To understand Finland's reputation as a good model for media literacy, the following sections in this chapter will review the history, policy, roles, responsibilities and implementation, and evaluations regarding Finland's media literacy efforts.

4.1 Historical background of media literacy in Finland

During World War Two, film was utilized to promote propaganda. In the post-war era, there was new academic curiosity and study to make the distinction between film and communication, from entertainment and propaganda. In the 1960's, techniques gleaned from art education were used to debate and scrutinize the topics of war, gender, and equality in the media. Television had entered Finnish households and brought the themes of the current social tensions, normally discussed in schools, into the homes of citizens. In the 1970s, Finnish media education became more systematic and delivered to the masses. Within this new form of education, narratives, expression style, and information technology were introduced. This mass delivery of media education prompted the development and implementation of comprehensive school-curricular-principles, in 1972. This is the first time that critical evaluation and selection of media was introduced and systematically incorporated into the Finnish school curriculum (KAVI, 2021, p. 9).

In the 1980s, self-made audio-visual media or "home-made" videos and audio recordings became more prevalent in western society as media technology and cost improved. Individuals could demonstrate creativity and self-expression more easily through media. The introduction of music television, along with the rise of self-made media, required media education to adapt and include these new themes. In the 1990s, computers, and everyday use of the internet and mobile phones, influenced the way society communicated and received information. Therefore, media education began to include information technology and virtual learning as the internet became a nearly ubiquitous household resource.

In the 2000s, Finland became one of the leading countries for promoting media literacy programming for young children. For example, the non-governmental organization (NGO), Finnish Society on Media Education, was founded by researchers and educators to foster the development and promotion of media literacy in Finland. Through this initiative, Finland recognized the importance of media literacy being introduced to young children, a practice Finland is renowned and praised for today (KAVI, 2021, p. 10). In 2005, media literacy was incorporated as a part of teachers' education as well. Media literacy became a part of university education with master's degree programs on this subject. During this time, the national framework of stakeholders in media literacy was established. This led to cross-disciplinary research and expanded international cooperation (Forsman, 2019, p. 65). Media literacy grew past the confines of primary school and into universities.

By the 2010s, media literacy had national-level support and was included in several governmental policies. Finland recognized that a strong media literacy education enhanced democratic participation of its citizens and promoted healthy civil discourse. Media literacy became more

recognized and the demand to promote media literacy became more accepted by several sectors of government and society. As a result, media literacy for adults was created (MoEC, 2019, p. 7).

As media literacy grew in national and cross-sector support, the roles, and responsibilities to implement media literacy evolved. In 2012, the Media Education Authority was founded under the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC). Subordinate to the MoEC, the National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI), along with its department for media education and Audiovisual Media (MEKU), was established in 2014 with the legal responsibility of promoting media education, to include media literacy (MEKU, 2021). To ensure a systematic and comprehensive implementation of media literacy education, the first national media literacy policy was published, in 2013. In this document, democratic participation and social inclusion were the focal point of policy. Media literacy promotes healthy internet participation and enables citizens to participate in activities of the community (MoEC, 2013, p. 20).

The EU Directive 2018/1808, published in 2018, obligated member states to promote media literacy. Article 33 a .1 states, “Member States shall promote and take measures for the development of media literacy skills” (The EU, 2018, p. 23). In Finland, media literacy was already set in motion, however, that same year, the need to update the media literacy policy was stated in the government resolution of 2018. Continuous advances in technology such as algorithms and artificial intelligence increased the targeting of media consumers. Media had become more diversified and, at times, as a weapon of choice for malign actors. Therefore, in July 2018, the Finnish government adopted a resolution on the Media Policy Program. In this resolution, the government called for enhanced media literacy and related skills to include new target groups, such as adults, to build societal resiliency against disinformation and hybrid threats (influence) from malign actors. To complement this, the government also called for increased awareness regarding disinformation, improved fact-checking, and opposing hatred towards journalists (Alen-Savikko, 2018). In response to this requirement, the MoEC assigned the KAVI to update media literacy policy in cross-sectoral collaboration with various parties associated with media education and literacy (MoEC, 2019).

The revised policy was published in 2019 to address these challenges and introduce efforts to support media literacy education for adults (MoEC, 2019). Today media literacy can be found in core curriculum of pre-primary schools, universities, community centers, and libraries. The Finnish government seeks to provide media education that is high quality, targets diverse groups and is available to all. The following sections will describe how Finland’s media literacy is structured and implemented.

4.2 Policy in media literacy

Out of the three countries, Finland is the only country with a media literacy policy. The policy is well-developed and advanced. Therefore, it deserves extra attention. Within Finland's media literacy policy, the terms media education and media literacy are mainly used. The term media education refers to education regarding media production, use of digital tools and media literacy. When the reader sees the term *media education* in the documents this also means media literacy education. The term *media literacy* refers to the skillset achieved by media education.

Previous policy

In 2013, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) drafted the Cultural Policy Guidelines to promote media literacy for implementation for 2013-2016. This policy derived its guidelines from the objectives depicted in the Finnish Government Programme, a national strategy of the sitting prime minister's government (MoEC, 2013). Previously, media literacy was addressed in the 2004 cultural policy of the MoEC. Media literacy was finally given its own policy document to ensure a stronger position and recognition for media literacy within the government and society. This policy sets out to update approaches to media education and establish media literacy as the main area of focus.

This policy was built upon the ideals set out by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This convention highlighted how media literacy is relevant to; how a child receives and produces information, uses media for self-expression, and their participation in society. Media literacy contributes to safe internet use and minimizes cyber-bullying. Consequently, these goals support the well-being of children and adolescents (MoEC, 2013).

The policy also emphasized for the first time the notion that media literacy interfaces with different sectors of society. The policy supports this idea by characterizing each sectors' role, responsibility, or relationship in supporting media literacy. Sectors listed for example are education, universities, NGOs, development centers, media, cultural services, and museums (MoEC, 2013, p. 12).

The policy identifies challenges and trends in media education and media literacy. Examples of challenges include: the lack of competence from experts regarding working with children in media education, no systematic collection of data on the provision of media education, and the lack of uniform understanding of media literacy. Media literacy has multiple definitions internationally. The policy highlighted the importance of a common definition for Finland and building a greater understanding among educators on what quality media literacy is. Finland set out to anchor media literacy as a citizenship skill which included critical interpretation and interaction skills (MoEC, 2013).

The policy defines four separate goals for media literacy in Finland. The most important of the four was to ensure that every child and adolescent has the required skills to participate in society and access information. Quality competency in media literacy is essential for inclusion and participation in society. Next, the policy describes actions necessary to promote the achievement of this goal (MoEC, 2013). Finally, the policy identifies which parties have a special role in implementing the actions as depicted in Figure 2. This policy does not dictate or assign, but rather, suggests these roles.

Goal 1: High-quality every-day media education centred around children and young people will be implemented in Finland.	
Actions that promote the achievement of this goal	Parties that can have a special role in implementing the actions
Securing adequate resources for media education and educators at the local level.	Local government and planning work in municipalities and units.

Figure 2

The 2013 media policy created a starting point to give media education and media literacy: proper legitimacy, clearly identified stakeholders, set goals, and a framework for the implementation of media education and media literacy. This policy, however, placed the strongest emphasis on media education and developing the digital skills to be active participants in society. When discussing media literacy, the focus was on mastering the use of media, receiving information, and safe internet use, and not source-critiquing skills. Additionally, the 2013 policy limited the target audience of media education and media literacy to children and adolescents within the education system (MoEC, 2013). The issues of misinformation, deception, or manipulation and its effect on a democratic society had not yet been introduced. In the updated 2019 policy, these issues are addressed in media literacy education. The current, 2019, policy now expands education to all age groups as the dangers and complexity of disinformation are even more prevalent.

Current policy

The 2019 media literacy policy is the current policy in use with a greater emphasis on addressing threats to society and democracy. Threats specifically mentioned are: targeted dissemination of disinformation, anti-democratic language, sexual harassment, and hate speech (MoEC, 2019). Finland’s government promotes that a media literate society can protect itself against these threats with a strong foundation in media education to promote responsible use of media and strong media literacy to build resiliency against these threats. The policy highlights that the key to successful implementation of media education and literacy is cross-sector collaboration. An effort the

government seeks to promote and guide with this updated policy (MoEC, 2019). In this policy, the MoEC identifies three objectives for media education with ways to achieve them. The policy then identifies trends and challenges to be considered for the development and implementation of media education. The policy lists key stakeholders with their roles and responsibilities. The policy then gives guidance for implementation of media education. The policy is concluded with a summary on follow-up assessments on the state of media education in 2019.

In the 2019 media education policy, the three main objectives are that media education is: comprehensive, of high-quality, and systematic (MoEC, 2019, p. 14,16,18).

Objective 1: comprehensive media education: the education provided will reach all of Finland and be accessible to various target groups. Media education will cover different topics extensively such as media literacy.

Objective 2: High-quality media education: education provided will be developed, planned, and executed based on domestic and international research.

Objective 3: Systematic media education: financing, and the knowledge repository of media education, will be consolidated.

Future requirements

Media literacy requirements are changing. Media literacy will require skills in source assessment, rhetoric, and recognizing motives behind content to enhance media criticism. It will also need to be current with trends in false narratives such as anti-science or mistrust towards the media (MoEC, 2019). Media literacy will also need to include user safety trends such as cyber security, privacy, and data security.

Competency requirements for educators will change. The required training for educators will increase as trends evolve and the demand for media literacy increases. This policy aims to expand media literacy for all age groups. Thus training catered to specific age groups, and learning abilities, must be developed and implemented (MoEC, 2019, p. 26).

Challenges for media education

The current policy highlights the following challenges in media education. Media education lacks resources. Lack of resources affects the hiring of educators, individual competency development, and the overall organization of activities, to name a few. Funding can be sourced from external financing in the form of short-term projects. However, short-term projects are not enduring and media literacy education works best when students receive periodic, re-occurring training (Van der Linden, 2023). Resources, however, can be conserved by networking and sharing information to prevent redundancy and reinvention. More resources can also be allocated by the government through the budgeting process (MoEC, 2019).

Collaborations, coordination, and networks in media education are insufficient. The geographical dispersion can make collaboration difficult when various actors in the field of media education reside in various parts of Finland. The use of digital tools such as video chat or cloud-based sharing can mitigate these challenges and support information exchange (MoEC, 2019, p. 27).

There are deficiencies in the competences related to media education. As the media environment evolves at a rapid pace, so must the competence of educators. This can be resolved by accessible and re-occurring supplementary training. To reach educators across the various sectors, there must be improved networking and distribution of updated publications (MoEC, 2019, p. 28).

There is regional inequality in the implementation of media education in Finland. Long distances between populated areas make coordination difficult and limit the understanding of each region's requirements and internal challenges. Limited transport in rural areas inhibits the ability for citizens to travel and participate in media education. Additionally, the expertise in media education is often consolidated in larger cities and rural areas are left with a limited number of competent educators and researchers. To address this, operating models intended for rural areas must be further developed. For example, coordination and networking with the aid of digital collaboration tools must be incorporated and promoted (MoEC, 2019, p. 28).

Media education is not recognized or valued enough. Although media education has been implemented in Finland for quite some time, its recognition is not widespread. Additionally, prejudices towards media education and media literacy hinder its implementation. This can be mitigated by targeted communication towards various actors to increase awareness and promote a positive narrative regarding media education and media literacy.

4.3 Roles, responsibilities, and implementation.

Actors involved with promoting media literacy are a mixture of governmental parties, with statutory obligations to promote media literacy, and NGOs, with vested interests to support media literacy in

Finland. Below the actors will be categorized into those on the national government level, practical level, regional level, NGOs, and international actors.

National government level

On behalf of the Finnish government, the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for education, science, cultural, sports, and youth policies. The MoEC supports media literacy by allocating resources and developing legislation in this campaign. Subordinate to the MoEC is the Finnish National Agency for Education, which is responsible for curricula development and financing of media literacy (KAVI, 2021). These duties are assigned by the Act 564/2016 and the Government Decree 1070/2016.

In 2020, the MoEC launched the New Literacy Development Programme for 2020-2023 in an effort to bolster children and adolescent's media literacy skills in early childhood education, pre-primary education, and basic education (MoEC, 2021).

In this new framework, the three focus areas of media literacy are:

- Interpretation and evaluation of media
- Media production
- Operating in media environments

The framework provides a roadmap of media literacy progression from early childhood education (day-care) to grade 7-9 education. In early childhood education/care, children begin familiarizing themselves with everyday media and media devices. Children learn media production as a playful activity to demonstrate self-expression. In pre-primary education, children begin to interact with media with new perspectives, such as discerning fact from fiction. In Grades 1-2, students begin to examine and produce content. They learn how to use media safely to include responsible media usage that discourages bullying or inappropriate messaging in the media environment. At this stage of development, the relationship between the user and media begins to evolve as students begin to understand the effects media can have in their own social environment. In grades 3-6, the purpose of media use broadens. Students practice interpreting and creating content.

Source criticism is introduced, and students begin to consider their own well-being regarding media consumption and creation. In grades 7-9, students further develop their competence in responsible media content creation to include content focused on influencing and communicating information. Students begin to evaluate the reliability of social media as an information source. These media literacy skills are based on the principle of fostering one's well-being by making responsible choices

when using media. Building a healthy relationship in early education with media, together with developing media literacy skills, are the key factors to creating individual resiliency in students, against disinformation. A skillset that can endure into adulthood (Opintopolku, 2023).

To support this curriculum, teachers also need to be competent in media literacy. The Finnish National Agency for Education provides media literacy guidance and state-financed training for teachers. The agency develops and consolidates pedagogic materials on media literacy which is made available online (KAVI, 2021, p. 52).

The National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI) has a legal duty and authority to promote media literacy as it is a subordinate organisation to the MoEC. KAVI publishes the current media literacy policy with an action plan and promotes media literacy related activities through their medialukutaitosuomessa.fi website. KAVI maintains online resources such as videos, graphics, and other educational materials, free-of-charge, on its media literacy School website (www.mediataitokoulu.fi). KAVI also supports teachers with free consultation on the preparation and implementation of media literacy training plans (MoEC, 2019, p. 13,51).

KAVI represents Finland in international collaboration projects such as the European Commission (EC) Media Literacy Expert Group and the Safer Internet for Children Expert Group. They are also responsible for national collaboration which is carried out through the Media Literacy Week. An event that gathers hundreds of participants to promote media literacy (MoEC, 2019, p. 13,51). KAVI coordinates the Media Education Forum for professionals, an annual forum for researchers, decision-makers, information professionals, and government employees on issues related to media literacy (KAVI, 2013, p. 9) (MEKU, 2021, p. 7).

The Ministry of Justice promotes media literacy as part of democratic education. The ministry believes that media literacy promotes inclusion, deters hate speech, and mitigates influence that leads to criminal activity (MoEC, 2019, p. 37). The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for promoting internal security in Finland. In 2016, the Ministry of the Interior published a national action plan to prevent violent extremism and radicalization. Media literacy is promoted in the plan as a means of intervention against these threats that are often provoked by disinformation and hate speech (MoEC, 2019, p. 37).

Practical level

Media literacy education is primarily carried out by teachers in schools. They are responsible for providing instruction from the national core curriculum, which includes media literacy. Libraries also play a significant role in providing media literacy education to diverse target groups. The Finnish

Library Association provides media literacy education to adult audiences outside the education system. This is a practical way to reach adult and elderly populations in numerous municipalities (MoEC, 2019, p. 5).

Regional level

At the regional or municipal level, libraries are essential in implementing media literacy education. Municipalities, in coordination with the libraries develop their own media education strategy that is in line with the national media education strategy (Kanerva & Oksanen-Sarela, 2023). In some instances, the municipalities develop their own training materials separate from the national core curriculum. Libraries are necessary for reaching adult target groups, occasionally this occurs in coordination with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs have experience and knowledge with various target groups and can assist libraries in shaping education to meet the needs of those groups. Examples include, the Finnish lifelong learning foundation, Finnish Pensioners' Federation, and the Central Union for the Welfare of the Aged (KAVI, 2021, p. 39).

Additionally, the media sector plays a role in supporting media literacy. Many media organizations, like the Finnish Newspaper Association and the Federation of the Finnish Media, support media literacy by producing educational materials. Media education is identified as the association's strategic goal, as it promotes responsible content creation and rebuilds trust in reliable journalism.

Universities and institutes of higher education also play a significant role in supporting media literacy. Research data, from universities and institutes, expands the knowledge base for Finland's media education. This data also provides assessments, and determines the efficacy and implementation of, media literacy. Eight out of ten universities in Finland are involved in on-going research and instruction in media literacy. Media literacy research provides opportunities for international collaboration with foreign universities and improves the overall knowledge base of media literacy for Finland (MoEC, 2019, p. 42).

Non-Governmental Organizations-NGOs

NGOs play a special role in engaging hard-to-reach audiences. Finland is a sparsely populated country with vast distances between communities. NGOs have strong regional networks that assist in facilitating media literacy education (KAVI, 2021, p. 5). One key NGO is the Finnish Society of Education. This is a youth focused organization that utilizes youth policy grants to promote and develops media education in Finland (Mediakasvatus, 2023). This NGO conducts its own research and bridges the gap between research and practical activities. Additionally, this organization manages

media literacy networks such as the Network for Regional Media Literacy Actors and the Network for Swedish Speaking Media Literacy (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 175).

International actors

As mentioned previously, the European Union obliges member states, via the EU directive 2018/1808, to develop and promote media literacy in their countries. In turn, member states must report on their implementation measures to the EC. The EC keeps track of over 547 media literacy projects and 189 different media literacy networks. The EC is also responsible for steering several expert groups on media literacy and media education. Such groups contain representatives from the member states. The EC also conducts follow-up assessments on their recommendations on media literacy. In 2019, the EC published a comparative analysis on the promotion of media literacy among member state (MoEC, 2019, p. 45).

4.4 Financing media literacy in Finland

Media literacy in Finland is part of the national strategies under overall education strategies. Therefore, it receives funding from the state, specifically from the MoEC. Under the guidelines of the media literacy policy, financing for media literacy education is consolidated and diversified. This is an effort to support education that is high quality, equal (or non-discriminatory), and consistent (MoEC, 2019).

To manage financial resources, existing structures, networks, and activities are evaluated and new ones are created if necessary. New efforts are built upon existing structures, where possible, to ensure continuity and mitigate redundancy or wasteful reinvention. Despite comprehensive financing of media literacy in Finland, financing is not limited to state funds. Financing from international, regional, and local sources are used. The media literacy policy identifies that, Finland requires more resources and looks to external financing, to supplement their efforts. Currently, there are over 100 NGOs that support media literacy. Some of these organizations focus on the welfare of Finnish youth and view healthy online behavior as a contributor to youth welfare. Examples of these organizations are Save the Children Finland and the Finnish Parents League and the 4H club (MoEC, 2019).

Municipalities may receive state funding that is set aside for the library systems to promote media literacy. They may also receive funding for media literacy education through “the digital approach to youth information and counseling services.” This funding is shared by the regional state administration with an estimated annual cost sum of €1 million (EC, 2023).

Finland also receives international funding. In October 2021, the US Embassy Finland, Public Affairs section gave \$17,000 in a grant for the Bloom media literacy workshop. The workshop ran from November 2021-May 2022. This small project was created to strengthen international collaboration in media literacy education. This included students and teachers from the US and Finland to promote critical thinking in audiences faced with disinformation (Keodara, 2021). Though this is a small portion of Finland's media literacy funding, it is another example on how international funding promotes knowledge sharing and collaboration. This collaboration, in the long term, will reduce resource costs by mitigating the cost of re-inventing best practices.

4.5 Evaluations of media literacy in Finland

KAVI regularly studies and evaluates the implementation of the media literacy policy. This is done through surveys or panels of experts with various stakeholders listed in the policy. Information in the current policy is derived from data collected in the spring of 2019, prior to the publication of the policy. Data was collected through an online survey, open to everyone associated with media literacy. Interviews were conducted with various professors in media education. Respondents shared perspectives into the current state of media literacy to include trends, strengths, and challenges. The responses brought to light the challenges associated with implementing local and regional media education and the need to target diverse groups such as older audiences. To foster transparency and promote cross-sector-collaboration, an electronic draft of the current policy was open for comments on the government website, lausuntopalvelu.fi, which allowed for at least 71 respondents to contribute remarks (MoEC, 2019).

An external study was conducted by Stanford University to compare media literacy in U.S and Finnish Students. This study evaluated the critical thinking skill

s of participants through their performance of media literacy related tasks. The study was administered to 348 students. Participants were divided into three groups; high school students in California, Finnish students preparing to enter a two-year International Baccalaureate Diploma Program, and a Finnish graduating cohort. This study was carried out to determine if there was a correlation between Finland's curricular approaches and identifying disinformation through the use of critical thinking (Horn & Veermans, 2019, p. 1). The study highlights that Finnish National Core Curriculum embeds media literacy skills, specifically critical thinking, over ten different courses instead of a stand-alone subject. In contrast, California Common Core State Standards does not include the term 'critical thinking,' nor is there a stand-alone course on that subject (Horn & Veermans, 2019, p. 25).

In this study, task assessments were carried out by the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG) to measure the extent of students' media literacy skills. Students were given five tasks which included argument analysis, source analysis on social media, social media argument analysis, evidence analysis of images, and comparing the reliability of online articles. These tasks were designed to assess the students' ability to practice "civic online reasoning", which is the ability to evaluate the reliability of sources, search for evidence, and understand online context. SHEG concluded that the results determined that Finnish students consistently outperformed U.S. students in the assessment tasks. They also concluded that the U.S. students ability to critically reason about online information was "bleak" (Horn & Veermans, 2019, p. 13). Though this sample of the study is small, the results indicate that Finland is doing well in strengthening the resiliency of their student population against the dangers of disinformation.

5. Sweden

Like Finland, Sweden has effective and comprehensive media literacy efforts. However, their scope is slightly smaller, and their government media literacy policy is still a work in progress. To understand Sweden's approach to media literacy, the following sections in this chapter will review the background, policy, roles, responsibilities, implementation, and studies of Sweden's media literacy efforts.

5.1 Historical background of media literacy in Sweden

Sweden has a different perspective on media literacy than Finland. In government documents, there is more emphasis on the critical analyses of information than general media education. In Sweden, there are few terms to describe media literacy. The most used term found in curriculum, and often used as a synonym for media literacy, is "källkritik," (translated: source criticism). The term used by the government and education department is "media och informationskunnighet" (translated: media and information literacy (MIL)). Information literacy is knowledge about information sources, central competencies, and attitudes. Media literacy is the ability to assess information in mass media. Much different than Finland, who includes general media education with media literacy in Finnish policy and curriculum. Both ideas, media and information literacy, combine to form the necessary skills citizens require to navigate the digital information environment. A third term that is used by researchers at the University of Uppsala, is "civic online reasoning." This term combines the actions of sourcing information, comparing sources, and searching for evidence. Civic online reasoning is the

combination of media, information, and digital literacy (Nygren & Guath, 2021, p. 2). The Swedish State Media Council, who is responsible for promoting media literacy, utilizes the term MIL with a digital perspective. Their use of the term, MIL, is civic online reasoning. In this section the term media literacy will be used to represent civic online reasoning, MIL, and source criticism.

Before the terms media literacy or civic online reasoning were used, the term source criticism was frequently utilized. The term was popularized among Swedish academics when factual claims about Nordic medieval history came under scrutiny. Two Swedish brothers, who worked in the history department at Lund University, utilized source criticism to research the facts surrounding Swedish medieval history and verify previous claims (Björk, & Johansson, 2009, p. 360). Today, source criticism is the term utilized in Swedish curriculum as part of media and information literacy and a tool to help students identify reliable sources and trust the sources they use.

In 2017, the Swedish government decided to adjust the curricula to strengthen media literacy. Efforts include introducing media literacy programming in technology and mathematic subjects within compulsory education, strengthening the abilities of students to critically evaluate sources, strengthening the abilities of students to solve problems and develop ideas utilizing digital technology, and developing the student's understanding of the impact of digitalization on the individual and society.

From January 2015 to June 2016, the Swedish Media Council oversaw Sweden's participation in the EC project, "Safer Internet". This program, which includes Finland, promotes safe and responsible use of the internet, which contributes to improved media literacy and protects users from the dangers of disinformation (Statens Medieråd, 2023b).

In July 2018, the Swedish Media Council and the National Agency for Education were assigned as the main government actors responsible for promoting and managing media literacy. A concerted effort to empower children and young people to be responsible online users and safeguard them from malign influences (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 5). As an EU member, Sweden responded to EU directive 2018/1808, article 33a. by incorporating media literacy efforts into Swedish law in 2022 in the Radio and Television Act (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 22).

By 2022, global events such as the COVID-19 Pandemic and the war in Ukraine motivated the Swedish government to increase efforts in media literacy. Issues concerning disinformation was taking center-stage in public discussion at the national and international level. It became increasingly important to support media literacy efforts to strengthen the Swedish population's resistance to foreign influence. That same year, the Swedish National Agency for Education defined media and

information literacy as it is understood today as “the ability to find, analyze, critically evaluate and create information in different media and contexts”. Although the curriculum may not explicitly say media and information literacy, it does include skillsets that work towards building media and information literacy objectives (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 38, 81). These skillsets associated with media and information literacy are also identified and discussed in the current Swedish media literacy policy discussed in the next section.

5.2 Policy in media literacy

Sweden has not developed a media literacy policy but intends to. In the meantime, a document mapping the promotion work for media literacy is used. The Swedish Media Council first documents to map promotion work were created in 2014 and 2017. However, media literacy was not a coherent field and the framework varied. As the information environment evolved in technology and complexity, the 2021-2022 “Promotion of Media Literacy in Sweden” included a formalized network of media literacy actors, categorization of responsibilities, and identified areas for improvement. The media literacy promotion document also defines conditions to provide direction and facilitate the promotion and management of media literacy. This document provides a compilation of survey data and analysis of media literacy in Sweden to provide the basis for improvement.

The document first frames media and information literacy as education and skills required for increased participation in the democratic process and contribution to society. Education and skills identified under the media and information literacy concept include the understanding of digital technologies in media and communication, understanding freedom of speech, understanding how media is created and critical evaluation of online information. As seen in figure 3, each facet is not viewed in isolation but as interdependent parts that work together to strengthen media and information literacy in the population (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 9).



Additional Swedish legislation that is relevant to media literacy are the freedom of speech constitution, the form of government legislation, the freedom of the press act, the library act, the museum act, and the school act. Additional government management documents that are relevant to media literacy are the Digitalization Strategy from the Department of Economic Affairs and the Strategy for Stronger Democracy from the Culture Department. Both strategies emphasize the importance of the population's ability to understand and manage information in the digital era. Within the "Strategy for a Strong Library System 2022-2025", libraries are recognized as a central actor in the promotion of media literacy for all groups. Within the "Democracy Strategy 2018", media literacy is a prerequisite for citizen's participation in democracy. Mention of media literacy in other documents reinforces the roles and responsibilities framework described in this document and promoting coordination between actors (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 22).

In the media literacy promotion document, the Swedish National Agency for Education outlines four areas where media literacy can be integrated in the curriculum. First, is the understanding of how

digitalization affects the individual and the development of society. Second, is the development of how to use and understand digital tools and media. Third, is developing an approach to media and information in a critical and responsible manner. Finally, is developing the problem-solving skills and transforming ideas into actions in a creative way with digital technologies. The first three areas contribute to building individual resiliency and responsibility when faced with disinformation. The skills from these areas enable students to critically examine information and understand the consequences of sharing information (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 39).

The media literacy promotion document identified the need to strengthen collaboration among researchers in the field of media literacy. There is a collaboration called the Academic Forum for media literacy research which is coordinated by Nordic Information Center for Media and Communication Research (Nordicom) at Gotenborg University on the behalf of the Swedish Media Council. This forum includes professionals from 14 different universities. Currently, universities have courses on disciplines associated to media literacy such as the source criticism course at Jonkoping University. However, media literacy is not a stand-alone subject. The promotion document recognizes that knowledge development of media literacy in academia is essential to developing content for teacher training and library programs (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, pp. 58–59).

The media literacy promotion document highlights that media literacy improves the population's resistance to foreign influence or pressure that can cause instability in society and democracy. The police are often met with riots or violent behavior instigated by a population's belief in disinformation. Previously under the Ministry of Justice, the Swedish Psychological Defense Agency was formed in January 2022 to analyze and counter disinformation to safeguard Sweden's open and democratic society from foreign influence (Statens Medieråd, 2023, p. 24, 26). These efforts are tied to the Swedish civil defense concept in which the population must have a strong resiliency against disinformation. In a conflict, hostile actors aim to influence Sweden's decisions and actions. This can undermine civil and military efforts to defend Sweden. Therefore a psychological defense is central to the total defense of Sweden (Roszbach, 2017). This is to mitigate foreign interference with the population's ability to participate in a potential civil defense of Sweden against a foreign aggressor. (J. Sundstrand & P. Noren, personal communication, August 24, 2023).

Importance of European cooperation

The media literacy promotion document recognizes that a successful media literacy endeavour requires international and national cooperation. Sweden cooperates with various European organizations to strengthen their media literacy and ensure alignment with the EU directive. Sweden is a participant in the EC's Media Literacy Expert Group to collaborate and discuss issues related to

media literacy (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 70). In addition to this group, EU member-states cooperate through the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (ERPA) and the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA). These groups provide a platform to discuss and exchange ideas and proven methods regarding media literacy. Collaboration of these groups resulted in the formation of the Media and Information Task Force (EMIL) within ERPA. This task force meets annually to discuss the research, surveys, and status of media literacy in various European countries. EMIL promotes workshops for teachers and discusses new challenges in media literacy such as algorithms and AI (ERPA, 2023).

5.3 Roles, responsibilities, and implementation.

This section will discuss the roles, responsibilities, and implementation at the international, national, practical, regional, and civilian level. The media literacy promotion document charts out, in the figure 4, the working relationship between actors at the global, European, national, and local/regional level. At the international level is UNESCO¹, the European level is the EU and EC. At the national level, is the Swedish parliament and the government promoting and managing media and information literacy among actors in the economic, educational, and civilian sector. The regional level includes school and community libraries. This gives a clear picture where overarching goals and requirements are directed from and who is responsible for their implementation and management (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 11).

¹ For more information on UNESCO's media literacy effort, visit www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy.

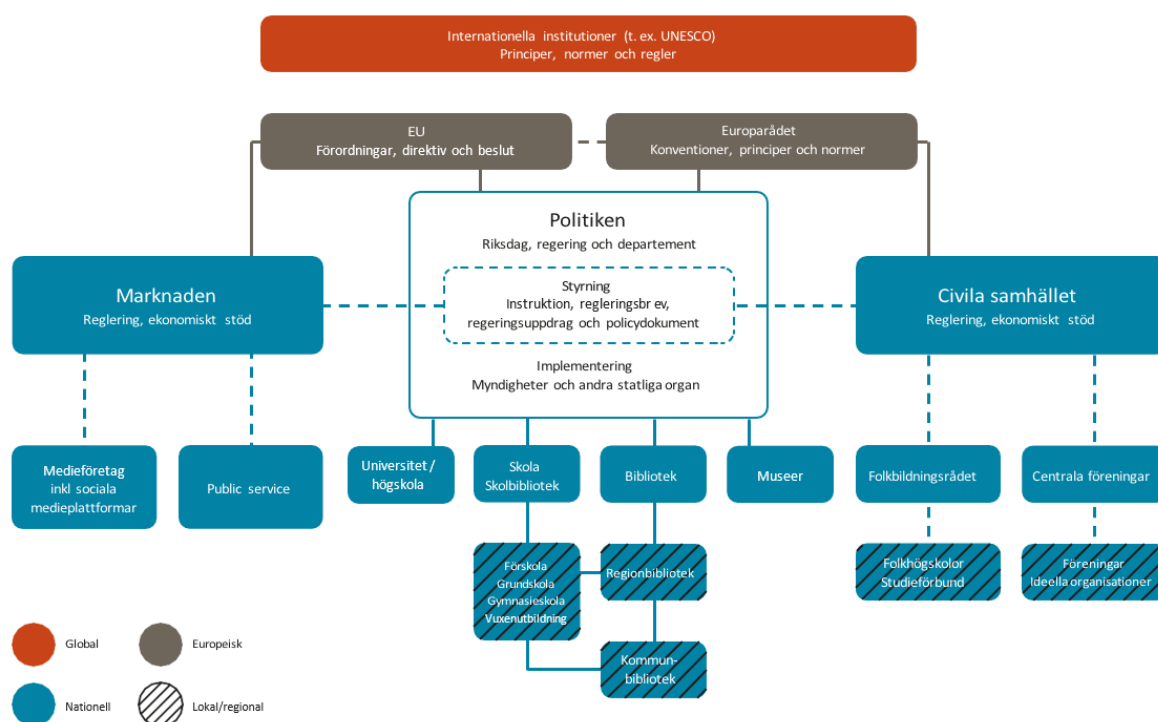


Figure 4, 2021-2022 Promotion of Media Literacy p. 11

National level

The Swedish Ministry of Culture is responsible for media and information literacy as it is an area centered around culture, film, media, and democracy. Subordinate to the Ministry of Culture, the Swedish Media Council is the assigned agency responsible for strengthening and promoting media literacy to develop responsible media users and protect users from harmful media influence (Statens Medieråd, n.d.-a). The council is responsible for conducting surveys related to media literacy to improve training for educators, identify shortfalls, follow up on stakeholders' promotion, and the implementation of media literacy. Survey data establishes a starting point for new goals, improved guidelines, and attainable requirements. The Media Council oversees the network for researchers in media literacy with the assistance from Nordicom. In 2018, the Swedish Media Council was tasked to formalize collaboration between the government and national organizations on media literacy. In 2019, a formalized network was established and as of 2022, there are over 25 members who work together to strengthen media literacy through knowledge development, improved quality, and improved efficiency. Examples include, telecommunication companies, the University Council, the Royal Library, the Swedish film Institute, and the Swedish museums.

An outcome of this network was the creation of a media literacy knowledge bank. This digital knowledge bank retrieves and collects media literacy material and learning resources from five members of the network. Currently, the bank has over 2000 resources and is managed at the national level to filter and consolidates resources in one place for educators to access. A centralized knowledge bank helps educators find resources they need that are vetted, updated, and good quality. This prevents parents and educators from being overwhelmed with the inefficiency of searching in multiple locations for resources (Statens Medieråd, 2023, p. 72). The knowledge bank also includes resources for parents and guardians regarding digital media use, social media platforms, and privacy settings. These guides do not specifically teach source criticism but it is a starting point for parents to be involved in developing healthy media habits in their children (Statens Medieråd, n.d.).

Through this network of collaboration, knowledge is developed and work in media literacy is streamlined (Statens Medieråd, 2023, p. 20,60,71). On 1 January 2023, the Media Council will merge with the Swedish Press and Broadcasting Authority and will become the Swedish Media Authority. This action is to create a cohesive authority that is prepared to meet the conditions, needs and challenges of the changing media environment (Statens Medieråd, 2023).

The document describes additional departments within the government that have a role in media literacy based on their inclusion of media literacy in their own policy documents. These include the Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Infrastructure, and the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for managing media literacy as a subject area in schools. This ministry is also responsible for libraries and state subsidies for adult education. Subordinate to this ministry is the National Agency for Education, which provides curriculum and other resources for teachers on media literacy (Skolverket, 2023b).

National curriculum plays an essential role in the implementation of media literacy efforts. The Education Act in Sweden regulates which subjects should be contained in the national curriculum. It is up to the teachers to structure their teaching in alignment with the curriculum. The Swedish National Agency for Education provides resources on media literacy for teachers via their website. On this website, teachers can access videos, webinars, checklists, and articles to help them structure their lessons and strengthen their understanding of media literacy. In collaboration with the Swedish School Inspectorate, the education agency assesses and evaluates how media literacy is being implemented in schools and identifies associated challenges. The results of this assessment are included in webinars to help educators navigate integrating media literacy into their schools and lesson plans (Skolverket, n.d.).

In Sweden, media literacy education is introduced in pre-school education, specifically with the skill set of source criticism. Students learn what sources are and the difference between fiction and non-fiction. Lessons are carried out in the classroom or school libraries. Media literacy in curriculum continues in grades 7-9 with critical online reasoning. As students' digital skills improve and internet use increases, lessons in media literacy begin to include source criticism with websites (Skolverket, 2023a). In upper secondary school, students have increased collaboration with the school librarian to learn how to critically assess information from texts or online. This is to build the student's understanding on how motives drive the source's messaging and design. During this stage of the curriculum, students also learn how they are affected by information in media, advertising, political debate, and social interaction. Students then apply source criticism to the information they consume on social media (Skolverket, 2023c).

What is unique to Sweden is the involvement of the Ministry of Infrastructure. They are responsible for the digitalization policy which includes media literacy skills. Another detail unique to Sweden is, the Ministry of Justice links media literacy to civil defence which includes psychological defense of the population (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 14). Media literacy is to strengthen the population's resistance to influence, especially in situations like the civil defense of Sweden. If there is an attack or invasion of Sweden, a civil defense is necessary to resist and expel the aggressor. Having a population that is prepared and united to protect Sweden's sovereignty and democracy, is critical. Disinformation has a great potential to erode will and disrupt unity in the population's ability to participate in a civil defense.

To build this psychological defense, the Swedish Psychological Defense Agency conducts media literacy training for adults and conducts research in this field. This agency ties media literacy training with other cognitive defense measures to protect the population from foreign malign influences. Through their operations department, the agency identifies, analyzes, and responds to disinformation. The agency collaborates with other relevant authorities to develop the methods and technology to accomplish this. The agency regularly communicates to the public via their web page or in the media to spread awareness about disinformation that is currently in circulation.

The capability enhancement department of this agency provides support to the population, media, municipalities, and voluntary defense organizations. Support includes education, exercises, and dissemination of research in psychological defense (Myndigheten för psykologiskt försvar, 2023). This also includes media literacy courses focused on age groups from 25 years to seniors. Unique to these courses are that they train instructors in the counties and municipalities to maximize their reach. They coordinate with libraries since they are social meeting areas for the rural communities. The

agency also collaborates with civil organizations to reach vulnerable target groups. An example of a vulnerable group is the Muslim population that gets their media from foreign countries. This year, Swedish authorities have dealt with violent behavior from immigrant populations that were influenced by provocative narratives in foreign media. To ensure stability and safeguard the freedom of speech, it is crucial that vulnerable groups receive media literacy training to help them navigate the global information environment (J. Sundstrand & P. Noren, personal communication, August 24, 2023). Today, the agency is a separate authority from the Justice Department and reports directly to the Swedish government (J. Sundstrand & P. Noren, personal communication, August 24, 2023).

Practical level

The media literacy promotion document defines, in figure 5, which actors are primarily responsible for promoting media literacy in every stage of life. For example, primary care educators are responsible for early stages, primary and secondary schools and libraries are responsible for children and young people. Universities, colleges, NGOs, and senior community centers are a few examples of responsible actors for promoting media literacy for adults. Actors that have an enduring role for all ages are the libraries, museums, and the media. Sweden clearly describes the relationships with a unique chart within the promotion document. The chart reaffirms the narrative that media literacy education is continuous throughout life and is necessary for developing a prepared population (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 15).

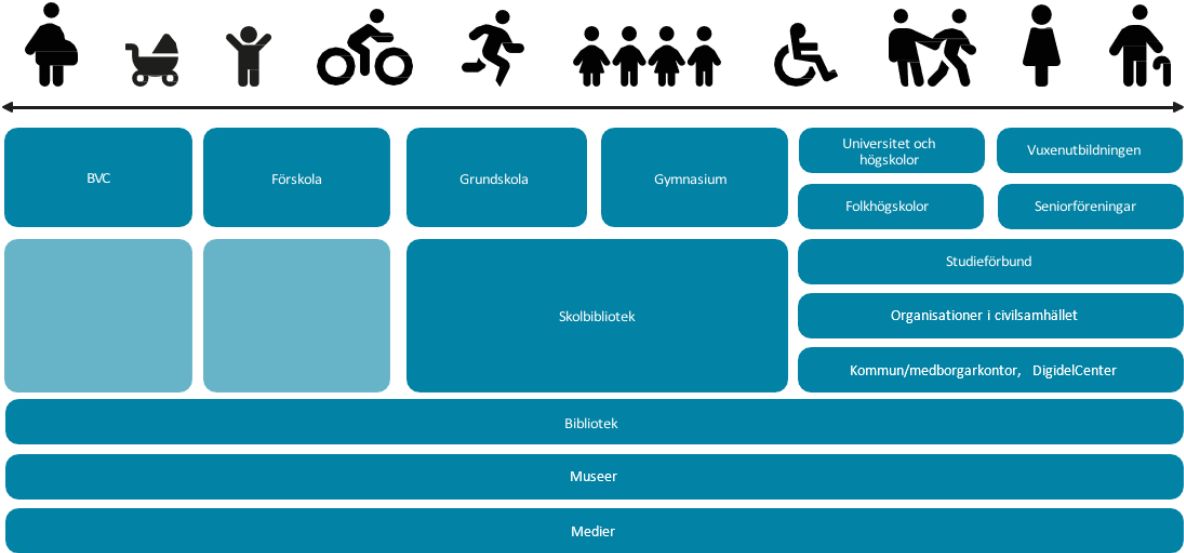


Figure 5, 2021-2022 Promotion of Media Literacy p. 15

School libraries play an important role in providing updated knowledge in media literacy. They serve as a hub for promoting media literacy and developing specific skills with the resources it provides. Students can build upon what they have learned in the classroom with additional media literacy resources at school. However, school libraries in Sweden are understaffed due to finances and shortfalls in recruiting. Librarians also require more training in media literacy (Statens Medieråd, 2023, p. 47-48). Despite limited staffing, school libraries provide digital resources on media literacy through their library portal.

Public libraries play a significant role in promoting media literacy, particularly for adults. Public libraries are assigned by the government via the Digital First initiative to improve the digital competence of the public, including media literacy. Public libraries provide activities on computer science and internet use for adults and seniors. Often, media literacy is integrated into these activities. Also, libraries are available in rural and urban areas of Sweden. They are an ideal meeting place to engage adults where they are and foster digital and media literacy. Unfortunately, the number of public libraries have decreased over the years which may be problematic for reaching adult populations (Statens Medieråd, 2023, p. 53).

The media literacy promotion document describes the role Swedish media has with media literacy. Media literacy is essential to developing responsible media users who can handle today's vast amount of information in the media environment. There is an increasing responsibility for the individual to be able to critically review information they access and knowing where to retrieve the right information. According to the media literacy promotion document, it is the responsibility of media to provide access to impartial and reliable reporting and investigative journalism. The media can also play a role in exposing disinformation, explaining journalism and ultimately improve the populations trust in journalism. To facilitate that, the Swedish media offers programs to promote media literacy while respecting the individual's responsibility to choose and examine information themselves. To reach all areas of Sweden, the public service media is tasked with providing a diverse range of media literacy activities in various areas. All three public service broadcasters, Swedish Radio (SR), Swedish Television (SVT) and Utbildningsradion (UR) offer services to promote media literacy. The most active broadcast service is UR.

UR has stated in their policy that they "will contribute to the individual being able to navigate in today's information landscape and be able to decide for themselves what is true, false, or in between. It is about strengthening media and information literacy (MIL), among everyone." (UR, 2023, p.15) A unique way that UR promotes media literacy is through a podcast called, "Hjarta och Hjarna" (translated: heart and head). This is a program in collaboration with SVT to promote the

discipline of source criticism by reviewing various claims that are frequently circulated in the information environment. UR produces radio and television shows for a wide range of audiences from students in primary school to adults. UR collaborates with other relevant actors to host public seminars at book fairs or other venues to promote media literacy. UR is a great example of how relevant actors in public service media reach and promote media literacy with adults who are not exposed to comprehensive media literacy education that is normally provided in school curriculum (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 67).

Regional level

At the regional level, the Meeting with Media and Information Literacy network is run by the Administration for Cultural Development in the Västra Götaland region. Since its creation in 2000, the network has consisted of 50 people and 20 different organizations. Though only identified as a regional network, it is a starting point after which other regions can model their potential networks (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 73).

All 21 regions, except Stockholm, have a cultural plan that conducts regional, cultural activities and develops focus areas. The main cultural areas connected to media literacy are the libraries' reading, and literature activities. Libraries are also tasked by the government to strengthen digital competence by integrating digital and media literacy into the libraries' activities at the local/municipal level. For example, local libraries host "DigidelCenter" or digital centers in their facilities. This is a municipal initiative to provide a place where residents can improve their digital competence and receive support on how to navigate the digital and media environment in their day-to-day life (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 30). This is a useful resource for adults and seniors to strengthen their media literacy outside the school system.

Civilian organizations

In Sweden there are several civilian organizations that include media literacy in their activities. These organizations range from media companies, adult education associations, and foundations for safer internet. These organizations promote media literacy to support democracy, online safety, and digital literacy. One example is the Swedish Library Association. This organization focuses on the development of society which includes media literacy activities (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 64)².

5.4 Financing media literacy in Sweden

Financing for media literacy primarily comes from the state budget as most media literacy is implemented through the national curriculum and supported by the Ministry of Culture. State actors

² For a complete list of organizations, refer to <https://www.statensmedierad.se/rapporter-och-analyser/material-rapporter-och-analyser/2023/framjande-av-medie--och-informationskunnighet-i-sverige>, p. 68,108

identified within the media literacy promotion document finance their media literacy initiatives/activities through their government agency's administrative appropriations and/or with special funds received through the government assignments. For example, the media literacy training provided by the Swedish Psychological Defense Agency receives its funding from the defense budget as its assignment is to bolster the psychological defense of citizens for a potential conflict (J. Sundstrand & P. Noren, personal communication, August 24, 2023).

The government also provides national grants to be awarded to projects for media literacy promotion efforts. Examples include funds distributed by the Swedish Post and Telecom Authority to promote development projects and digitalization. Another example are funds distributed to the Swedish Library Association's for development support. Support development for libraries for years 2020-2024 have had special emphasis on media and information literacy (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 21).

For non-governmental or non-profit stakeholders, financing for media literacy activities does not come from the state budget. In the Media Authority's survey, 7 of 10 stakeholders in media literacy utilize their own resources to finance the promotion of media literacy. Some activities are financed with special project funds, participation fees or external grants. To alleviate the cost of developing knowledge and expertise in media literacy, stakeholders collaborate with each other to share knowledge and best practices (Statens Medieråd, 2023, p. 76).

5.5 Evaluations of media literacy in Sweden

This section will go over conclusions from survey data the Swedish Media Council collected from media literacy national stakeholders and teachers. This information provided the council insight into the status of media literacy, identified program shortfalls, and created basis for improvement. The final two studies will go over conclusions from research conducted by the University of Uppsala to evaluate Swedish students' media literacy performance and the effectiveness of digital media literacy tools.

Survey data from educators

The Swedish National Agency for Education conducted a survey with teachers, pre-school staff, principals, and library staff to follow up on the implementation and challenges associated with media literacy education. The results and discussion were included in the media literacy promotion document to scope areas for improvement. An interesting finding was that two out of ten teachers believed that they did not have sufficient knowledge to teach students on safe internet use or critical examination of information found online. Furthermore, three out of ten teachers believed that they

did not have the sufficient knowledge to teach students how to critically examine images or videos found online.

The findings also highlight the lack of planning between schools and libraries to work together to develop media literacy in students. Teachers lack competence and confidence and are further impeded by a lack of planning to cover these shortfalls. To further compound these shortfalls, the findings indicate that just under half of school libraries are staffed part-time or more. Four out of ten school libraries are not staffed. There are also differences in how independent and municipal schools are staffed and how resources are accessed. Though the Education Act requires that students have access to libraries, inadequate staffing impedes this access and the library's ability to serve as an organic resource for promoting media literacy. Furthermore, the number of public libraries has decreased by 371 over the past five-year period. This is concerning, as libraries are central to connecting the adult population to media literacy with physical and online resources via the local library web portals (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 46,54).

Survey data from stakeholders

In 2021, a survey was conducted with national actors who promote media literacy. The survey followed-up on the efforts conducted by these stakeholders and gained insight to their varying perspectives. Through the regular collection of survey data, the Swedish Media Council was able to assess how initiatives were implemented, organized, and financed. The data contributes to continued development and the practice of media literacy through updated policy and management.

In the survey, stakeholders were asked which types of media literacy interventions or delivery methods were preferred. Of those surveyed, 90% of interventions were delivered or available online to reach more audiences. When asked how media literacy promotion was organized, 48% of stakeholders promoted media literacy in project form. 52% of stakeholders integrated media literacy into their framework of ongoing activities. 60% of stakeholders carried out their activities in collaboration with other actors such as universities, government organizations, and media literacy networks. 70% of stakeholders financed their own activities, while 20% were financed by special project funds (Statens Medieråd, 2023, p.76). When asked which target groups held the most focus, stakeholders responded that children and students were the primary training audience. The secondary audience of focus was the general public, followed by parents/guardians (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 77).

Finally, stakeholders were asked which topics within media literacy were the main themes of their interventions. Topics included general media literacy, digitalization, privacy, security, undue information influence, commercialization, and film. 41 % of interventions focused on general media

literacy, 22 % focused on digitalization and 12 % focused on privacy and security. The findings of the survey conclude that the selection of these focus areas are dependent on the knowledge and expertise of the stakeholders (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 78).

From the survey data, the Swedish Media Council was able to observe improvements that the stakeholders took to promote media literacy. The survey also provided insight on how media literacy was implemented at the national and regional levels. With this data, the Swedish Media Council identified items to sustain or introduce to improve Sweden's media literacy efforts.

The first item identified for sustainment is, that the collaborative responsibility for media literacy is maintained as a permanent responsibility. Media literacy matters are cross-political and cross-sectoral. They require continuous collaboration that is managed by the Swedish Media Council to ensure that media literacy efforts are cohesive and effective. It is an important step in ensuring the long-term sustainability of media literacy efforts (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 80).

A second item to be sustained is the current library model. Libraries in Sweden present a good model for promoting media literacy. Libraries have the structure to provide media literacy education at the municipal and local levels. They are a natural meeting place for all target groups to access knowledge, information, and education. It is easy to integrate media literacy in library activities as it is a skillset connected to the information resources the library provides. Library staff also receive additional training through an initiative of the National Library called "Digital First." This enables them to be better prepared to promote media literacy at the local/municipal levels (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 84).

A critical requirement identified in response to the survey findings is that a comprehensive national strategy is needed to sustain long-term promotion of media literacy. Having a unified and comprehensive strategy is important to ensure continued cross-sectoral and cross-political collaboration. The media literacy promotion document acknowledges Finland's national media literacy policy as an example to follow (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 84).

A second critical requirement identified is that a structured promotion of media literacy requires a cross-sectoral work. Cross-sectoral collaboration is a reoccurring theme throughout the promotion document, and it is important to improving the quality and implementation of media literacy. It is particularly important for promoting media literacy at the regional and local level. Currently, media literacy is not a major priority in some regions in Sweden. (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 82).

A third requirement is that media literacy needs to be clarified in education policy and curriculum to ensure that it is taught equally everywhere. As mentioned in the previous section, the wording of

media literacy does not appear explicitly in the Swedish curriculum, only skillsets related to media literacy. This may cause teaching on media literacy to vary from school to school and does not allow students to understand medial literacy in a holistic perspective. Also, by explicitly stating media literacy in all academic governing documents, developing knowledge specific to educators can be prioritized (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 83).

University of Uppsala studies

In 2021, the University of Uppsala, Sweden, conducted research on the ability of Swedish students to identify false information. 2,216 upper secondary school students were evaluated on their ability to source, evaluate, find evidence, and corroborate news. The study also evaluated student's performance in relation to their background and education. This study was motivated by the lack of performance studies on teenagers' abilities to evaluate digital news. There are many previous studies that emphasize the importance of the ability to identify fake news. However, there is a lack of investigation on the link between the student's ability and their background, education, self-reflection, and attitudes (Nygren & Guath, 2021, p. 3).

The study asked students to fill out a survey with self-rated questions which inquired about the student's educational background, attitudes towards news, and self-assessment on their civic online reasoning (media literacy) abilities. In total, there were 2,356 participants, aged 16-19 from 33 municipalities. The survey and the performance test consisted of 16 questions which measured the skills to source information, evaluate evidence, and measure corroboration. For the questions that measured sourcing, students were asked to separate ads from news utilizing screenshots from Swedish digital media. In the questions that measured evaluation of evidence, students were asked to evaluate a manipulated photo. In the questions that measured corroboration, students were prompted to visit a website discussing climate change and corroborate the information online. When measuring the attitudes, participants were asked if they regarded the information they consume as reliable and how important it was for them to consume information that is credible. Questions on attitudes attempted to find a link between general attitudes, critical thinking and the ability to navigate the digital information environment (Nygren & Guath, 2021, p. 6).

The results from this study found that students with educational backgrounds in technology, art and humanities performed well in the sourcing and evaluation of evidence section. Students that had a background in natural science performed significantly better in corroborating information regarding climate change. Students with a technology background were able to identify manipulated images. The study speculates that technical expertise supports the student's ability to debunk manipulated images while arts and humanities students are better prepared to identify misleading information in

text. The study also found it interesting that students that claimed to be good at fact-checking and searching, performed well at evaluating sources and evidence. The study speculates that the increase importance of digital literacy in Swedish curriculum may have influenced these results (Nygren & Guath, 2021, p. 10, 13).

With these results, the study concluded that students with the lowest media literacy score often had vocational school backgrounds and did not speak Swedish at home. Despite Swedish students performing well in the study, the results indicate that there is a social and educational divide that affects the media literacy of the population (Nygren & Guath, 2021, p. 13). This study echoes a few concerns the Media Council described in the media literacy promotion document, one being that there is a need for increased media literacy outside conventional classrooms and increased focus for vulnerable groups.

The same year, the University of Uppsala conducted a study to evaluate the effectiveness of media literacy in identifying false information. This study specifically evaluated online tools in the form of tutorials and testing. Participants included 209 upper secondary students. The online tool, or intervention, was called *The News Evaluator* (www.nyhetsvarderaren.se). Tutorials in this tool included media literacy skills such as lateral reading and click restraint. Throughout the tutorials students tested their fact-checking strategies when presented with viral news items, videos, and images. With each tutorial, students were given explicit feedback on their performance which gave them ample opportunities to revise their strategies throughout the online course (Nygren et al., 2021, p. 5).

The study found promising results with the use of online tutorials in fact checking. The results indicated that the use of digital aids led to better credibility assessment. Tutorials facilitated hands-on fact-checking on tasks with viral news or misleading information on social media. Students were able to practice media literacy skills and were given feedback on their performance at every step. This method gave students valuable insight and helped them develop their own fact-checking strategy. This type of intervention only required 20 minutes to significantly improve the participants ability to identify false information. This is a scalable intervention that is efficient and can be utilized to reach a wide range of target groups. This study demonstrates that online media literacy intervention in Sweden is an effective tool for addressing disinformation (Nygren et al., 2021, p. 15,17). Similar tools are utilized in other countries. For example, Norway utilizes the *Bad News Evaluator* (www.getbadnews.com/no/), a free online tool that also trains and provides feedback to users.

6. Norway

Modernized media literacy efforts in Norway are relatively young and less systematic compared to Finland and Sweden. However, Norway has a nationalized effort to promote media literacy to curb the harmful effects of disinformation and harmful narratives. To understand Norway's approach and increasing initiative to promote media literacy, the following sections in this chapter will review the background, policy, roles, responsibilities and implementation, and evaluation of Norway's media literacy.

6.1 Historical background of media literacy in Norway

In the late 1960s, early forms of media literacy education occurred when newspapers were distributed in schools to stimulate students' reading abilities. This was in cooperation with local newspapers to promote reading and cultivate future consumers. Media education, including media literacy and instruction regarding diverse forms of media, continued in the 1970s. In the 1980s, the concept of media education expanded to include communication theory, mass media analysis, film studies, and computer technology (Forsman, 2019). Media education was introduced in the national curriculum for primary and lower secondary education. Teachers were not compelled, but rather, encouraged to implement media and computers as training aids for all subjects. During this time, media education and information technology were separate subjects (Erstad, 2010, p. 22).

In the late 1990s, critical thinking and its relation to information in media, was finally introduced into the national curriculum. During this period, there was curriculum reform due to an increasing need for content creation and digital production education. These competencies were seen as valuable skills for the future job market. This prompted media education to be included in three-year vocational training along with upper-secondary level education (ages 16-19). By 2000, media and communications were introduced as a separate subject in vocational school. However, this subject was more focused on media production and less on media source criticism (Erstad, 2010, p. 22).

Between 2004-2005, the Norwegian parliament initiated a push to develop digital literacy as computers and the internet became enduring facets of daily life. This initiative was followed by the Program for Digital Competence 2004-2008. This program had four priority areas: infrastructure, competence development, digital teaching resources/curricula, and working methods. Within this program, source criticism was included in digital literacy (Udir, n.d.-a, p. 5).

In 2005, the Norwegian Media Authority (Medietilsynet) was founded. This is a subordinate authority under the Ministry of Culture and Equality. One of its duties, is to lead the cooperation of

organizations to promote media literacy. This organization continues to create and disseminate free training materials for students, teachers, parents, and seniors (Garvik, 2022).

In 2016, foreign influence in the U.S. presidential election through documented, fake Facebook accounts, unnerved Norwegians and brought focus to the growing threat of foreign influence via online disinformation. According to the Media Authority, “such influence will be able to pose a threat to democratic processes, the population’s trust in the conduct of elections, and thus, our (their) freedom and independence” (medietilsynet, 2021, p. 15). Norwegian media professionals and academics were beginning to understand how disinformation and hate speech was affecting society. This understanding led to the connection between disinformation in conspiracy theories and the radicalization of Anders Behring Breivik, the terrorist responsible for the massacre on 77 people on the island of Utøya, in Oslo on 22 July 2011. Norwegians then connected the consequences of disinformation to the national security of Norway (S. Karlsen, personal communication, October 13, 2023).

This realization motivated local journalists and newspaper companies to set business competition aside and cooperate with one another to counter the influence of disinformation, restore trust in thorough journalism and safeguard democracy. This cooperation led to the formation of a non-profit fact-checking organization called, Faktisk.no in 2017. Faktisk.no, which translates to “actual”, is a website that exposes false online content and educates the public on techniques used in fake news. However, fact-checking was not enough to prevent disinformation from infecting the population. “Creating resiliency in the population is the answer,” according to Tenk (S. Karlsen, personal communication, October 13, 2023). “Tenk”, which translates to “think”, is the educational department of Faktisk.no. Its creation, in 2019, was a result of Norwegian schools requesting Faktisk.no to assist them in the classrooms. However, employees of Faktisk.no were mainly journalists who were unsure how to train children. Tenk established an online repository of resources for students, teachers, and parents on tenk.faktisk.no, and began media literacy consultations in schools. This was an effort to blend the approach of teachers and journalists to bridge the gap between the media literacy studies and the Norwegian educational system. This echoes the statement by the Norwegian education department in their digitalization strategy for basic education for 2017-2021, that media literacy needed to be taught in schools, and not be simply a subject for universities to study (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 17).

Around the same time, the Media Authority began creating online media literacy resources on their website in alignment with the national curriculum. The Media Authority also began evaluating media literacy in the Norwegian population by conducting bi-annual reports. The most recent report in

2021 found that, age groups of 60+ years and 16-24 years, had the most difficulty with disinformation. In response to survey questions, senior age respondents (60+ years) considered themselves less competent to deal with disinformation than the rest of the general population. Additionally, this group scored the worst in identifying fake news when given examples of false articles. This finding identified the need for media literacy education for adults, specifically ages 60+ years. The report also found that, when it came to fact-checking, seniors were more likely to ask a friend to verify if the information was correct versus utilizing alternative fact-checking methods. This prompted the Media Authority to develop media literacy training designed specifically for seniors. In response to these findings, the Media Authority began publishing a media literacy for seniors magazine to educate seniors on critical media understanding, with a preferred media for that target group being print-media and cross-word puzzles (example in figure 6) (Medietilsynet, n.d.) .



Figure 6, Senior School, Medietilsynet

In 2022, the Norwegian government published a digitalization strategy which called for improved framework, robust legislation, and sufficient support (Den norske regjeringen, 2023, p. 2). This strategy recognized requirements to make digital skills, including media literacy, a priority, and an enduring facet of Norwegian curriculum. Though media literacy in Norway is not as robust or comprehensive as Finland or Sweden, it is steadily gaining importance and focus. Today, media literacy is part of the national curriculum and is supported with the help of several organizations. Additional organizations, such as the Data Protection Agency (Datatilsynet), the Norwegian Media

Business Association, and the National Digital Learning Arena, provide media literacy resources to schools.

Before proceeding to the following sections, it is important to note that among these organizations there are several terms used as synonyms for the term media literacy or terms closely related to it. The term, source criticism (kildekritikk) is the skill of discerning false information from accurate information, from a particular source. Source criticism shapes source awareness (kildebevishet), which is understanding how the knowledge from various sources is created, used and misused (UiO, 2019). Source criticism and source understanding then develop critical media understanding (kritisk medieforståelse). Critical media understanding is the competence level of how the media works to include topics on privacy, trust in media, and the evaluation of sources (Medietilsynet, 2021c). “Critical Media Understanding”, is the preferred term used by the Media Authority for media literacy. However, most other organizations in Norway utilize the term, source criticism. In the following sections, the EU defined term, “media literacy”, will be used to reference these three terms.

6.2 Policy in media literacy

Currently, Norway does not have a policy regarding media literacy. However, there are multiple strategies and an act that direct and influence the development and implementation of media literacy in Norway. The Education Act defines goals, roles, and responsibilities pertaining to education in Norway. In chapter 1, section 1-1 states that “pupils and apprentices must learn to think critically and act ethically and with environmental awareness” (Ministry of Education and Research, 1998). This objective is viewed as the starting point for the following strategies. However, the following strategies are focused on media literacy for children and young people with only one subordinate strategy that has media literacy efforts for adults.

Digitalization Strategy for Basic Education 2017-2021

In 2017, the Norwegian education department published, “Framtid, fornyelse, og digitalisering,” translated: future, renewal, and digitalization, as the digitalization strategy for basic education, 2017-2021. This strategy was developed to utilize opportunities offered by digitalization and to prepare students in information, communications, and technology (ICT) competencies. In this strategy, the only mention of media literacy is when the strategy emphasized the need for media literacy to be taught in elementary schools and not only in universities. There are a few measures proposed by the strategy to support ICT development and consequently, media literacy. For example, the strategy proposes to strengthen teacher’s digital competence with online further education, teacher specialist training, and improved research on ICT and learning. The strategy also proposes stimulation grants to develop digital learning resources (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, p. 9). Though the strategy

places little emphasis on media literacy, its proposals pave the way to create an optimal learning environment for future media literacy by expanding digital resources and improving teachers' digital competence.

National Strategy for Safe Digital Upbringing

In 2021, the Media Authority drew up a national strategy on safe, digital upbringing on behalf of the Ministry of Children and Families called "Rett på Nett," translated: right online. The strategy was created to facilitate and strengthen the coordinated public effort to ensure safe digital upbringing for children and young people. An important aspect of the strategy is that it states that digital competence includes knowledge about algorithms, source criticism, critical reflection, and digital judgement. All of which are facets of the EU definition of media literacy. Therefore, when the term digital competence is mentioned in other government documents, it includes media literacy (Den norske regjeringen, 2021, p. 24).

To generate the strategy, the Media Authority gathered input from children and young people by conducting focus groups and surveys. Utilizing this information, specific goals were created. The goals specific to Norwegian media literacy are to:

- Ensure that children and young adults have active, participatory, and safe digital upbringing.
- Develop student's digital competence.
- Increase the digital competence of parents and adults who work with children,
- Protect students from harmful online content and prevent harmful online behavior.
- Initiate research and make media literacy knowledge readily available.

Target groups for this strategy included: Children and young people, parents, authorities responsible for children and young people's development, people who work with children and young people, and media platforms (Den norske regjeringen, 2021, p. 9,10,13).

The strategy identifies the following challenges with internet use:

- Bullying and exclusion online.
- Poor mental health of internet users.
- Sexual messaging or sharing of nude images online as part of unhealthy online behavior.
- Democratic challenges with false or misleading information.

The strategy lists the following fundamental principles for ensuring safe online use. First, kindergarten digital practice should set the foundation in digital learning and start the ethical understanding related to digital media. Second, the school must have a central role. Third, students need to know where they can get assistance and advice. Fourth, digital support services for students must be of high quality and meet Norwegian privacy requirements. Finally, children must have access to safe and age-appropriate digital services (Den norske regjeringen, 2021, p. 23).

The strategy mentions where in a curriculum media literacy can be found, as examples for schools to follow. Media literacy, or in this case, digital competence, is not intended to be a stand-alone subject, but rather, blended in with other subjects such as social studies, public health, democracy, and citizenship (Den norske regjeringen, 2021, p. 25). This is to prevent viewing media literacy in life facet, but as a part of many facets in life.

The strategy also lists supporting goals to enable the previously mentioned main goals. To increase the digital competence of parents and adults who work with children. The following goals are areas for improvement: First, parents and adults who work with children must receive essential and current information and advice about children and young people's digital media use. Second, parents must receive information on digital parenting. Third, parents must get involved in the online conduct of their children. Finally, parents must understand how their own digital media affects their children (Den norske regjeringen, 2021, p. 27).

To support the goal of initiating research and making knowledge available, the following goals are areas for improvement: first, facilitate research on children and young people's daily, digital habits. Second, research vulnerable groups and recommend evidence-based measures to ensure safe digital development. Third, the research must be balanced when analyzing the benefits and risks associated with digital media. Finally, knowledge and research must be disseminated and available to the public (Den norske regjeringen, 2021, p. 33).

To support the idea of "strengthening coordination", the following goals are areas for improvement: First, adequate cooperation across responsible ministries and subordinate agencies. Second, the strategy must be incorporated into an action plan at the directorate level. Third, the work must have oversight from the specialist council for children's digital development. Fourth, as a coordinating body, the Media Authority must contribute to public-private cooperation on efforts to ensure safer internet use. Finally, ensure coherence between this strategy and other strategies, action plans, and measure relevant to safe use of digital media (Den norske regjeringen, 2021, p. 35).

The Digitalization Strategy 2023-2030

In 2023, the digitalization strategy was published for 2023-2030. The strategy acknowledges new challenges with new digital technologies such as artificial intelligence and distance learning. Though the strategy does not specifically name media literacy, it does recognize a related challenge. For example, parents and teachers are requesting to block portions of the internet for young students to limit their exposure to harmful content or negative influence found in mis/disinformation. However, the education department opposes this measure because internet filters on harmful content would create a false sense of security and must not replace training to develop digital judgement (Den norske regjeringen, 2023, p. 22). Measures to address this include, develop support material for good digital practice and competence, strengthen research and dissemination on digital practice in schools, and to create dialogue with the Parents Committee about the use of digital technology. The strategy also emphasizes that national authorities must provide comprehensive framework, legislation, and sufficient support for digitalization in education.

The Media Authority strategy

In 2021, the Media Authority published the 2021-2023 Strategic Plan. In this plan, the Media Authority stated that they shall contribute to ensure that the population has critical media understanding (basic media literacy skills). Critical media understanding will help the population navigate the media landscape, develop informed voters, and promote healthy participation in civil discourse. This will support freedom of speech and democracy which are fundamental and important to the media and nation (Medietilsynet, 2021b, p. 8).

6.3 Roles, responsibilities, and implementation

There are many actors that are involved in media literacy. Disinformation affects many aspects of society and requires involvement from both the public and private sector. Here are a few of the main actors that have significant impact in the development, implementation, and evaluation of media literacy in Norway.

National level

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Udir) is the executive agency for the Norwegian Ministry of Education and research. Udir is responsible for kindergarten, primary and secondary education. The directorate develops curriculum to ensure that students receive high-quality and equal education. They also ensure that the curriculum follows a national education strategy and Acts of Parliament (Udir, n.d). This includes the Education Act, which requires critical thinking skills be included in the national curriculum. The national curriculum serves as guidelines for teachers and developers of media literacy materials.

The Media Authority is directed by the Ministry of Culture and Equality to strengthen the critical media understanding, or media literacy, of the Norwegian population (Medietilsynet, 2021, p. 2). The Media Authority is responsible for creating media literacy materials and conducting information campaigns. The Media authority plays a central role in the implementation of media literacy goals depicted in the previously mentioned government strategies. They assist in developing these goals by collecting information from the public, and media literacy related actors, to identify challenges, shore up gaps, and create future requirements. The Media Authority is also tasked as the main coordinator for cross-sector cooperation to promote media literacy. This also includes mapping out media literacy measures described in existing government strategies and organizing efforts into an actionable plan. The Media Authority provides online lessons and resources for students, teachers, and parents, free-of-charge. Occasionally, the Media Authority delegates tasks in material development to other organizations (Den norske regjeringen, 2021, p. 28, 35). The Media Authority is also responsible for evaluating the media literacy of the Norwegian population in a bi-annual survey to help develop framework and goal parameters for future media literacy efforts (Medietilsynet, 2021a, p. 9).

Additionally, the Media Authority continues to support media literacy efforts with the digital resources they provide online. They maintain a YouTube channel with videos on media literacy topics, they have crossword puzzles and have a digital game that tests your ability to spot fake news called, the Bad News Game. The Media Authority provides resources for parents such as board game called, Dialogduk, translated as “dialogue canvas”, (see figure 7), to help parents facilitate conversations with their children regarding privacy, online conduct, and fake news (Medietilsynet, 2021). They provide media literacy education for seniors with a magazine called *Seniornett*. The Media Authority developed this magazine with real life examples, provided by seniors, to increase seniors’ knowledge of media literacy. The magazine informs seniors on how apps and websites gather personal information or preferences to create algorithms and shape the user’s experience. This affects what information they view and how it shapes their perceptions. Also included in this monthly magazine are fake news crossword puzzles. This magazine is available in digital or paper



Figure 7, Medietilsynet 2023

format to appeal to older age groups. The Media Authority also provides teaching plans and presentations for senior training that can be utilized at senior centers, libraries, or other settings where seniors regularly gather (Medietilsynet, n.d.).

The “Rett på Nett” strategy depicts the distribution of responsibility between various actors for safe digital upbringing. In Figure 8, the Ministry of Children and Families has overall coordinating responsibility. This includes driving policy development and communication with other ministries to ensure cooperation. At the directorate level, the Media Authority follows up and coordinates efforts with representatives from other government agencies, the civilian sector, and other organizations. Other government actors include: the ministry of Health and Welfare, Ministry of Justice and Public Security, Ministry of Local Government and modernization, and the Ministry of Culture (Den norske regjeringen, 2021, p. 36).

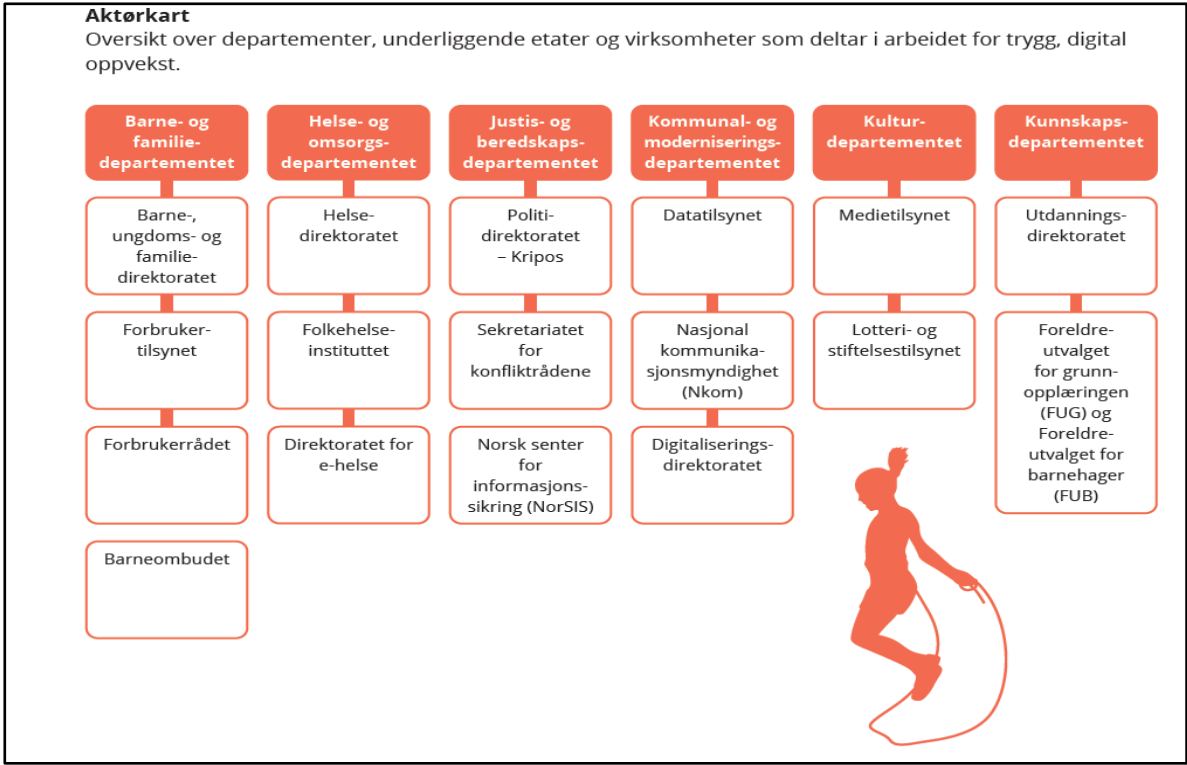


Figure 8, Rett på Nett

Dubestemmer.no, translated as “you decide”, is a collaborative project with the Data Authority (Datatilsynet) and Udir. The Data Authority is subordinate to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Affairs, which oversees region policy and financing (Datatilsynet, n.d.). As a project under the Data Authority, Dubestemmer teaches students about privacy and online etiquette, in addition to source criticism. They provide teachers tools to talk to students about media literacy to help students make good decisions for themselves and others. Like Tenk and the Media Authority,

Dubestemmer creates media literacy resources for parents to promote dialogue with their children (Dubestemmer, n.d.).

Implementing media literacy in the national curriculum.

Within the curriculum framework for basic skills from the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2013, digital skills, which includes media literacy, are listed as one of five basic skills: oral, reading, writing, digital, and numeracy. Within the digital skills category there are five subcategories. The "find and manage" subcategory relates to media literacy or critical media understanding. Levels 1-4 focus on developing digital research skills. Level 5 focuses on critical interpretation and the evaluation of digital sources (Udir, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, media literacy is not a stand-alone subject, but is imbedded within other subjects. In the Norwegian grammar subject, media literacy is taught to recognize forms of rhetoric in digital media, explore and assess how digital media affects language and communication, and to use sources in a critical manner in students' own work. In the subject of social sciences, media literacy is taught to frame current news stories and reflect on differences between facts and meanings.

The Media Authority helps facilitate teaching these themes by providing lesson plans for teachers. Included in these plans are the curriculum goals, recommended digital mediums for instructions, definitions of terms, and recommended learning activities, ranging from five minutes to two hours. This gives teachers the flexibility to incorporate media literacy with the resources and time available (Medietilsynet, 2022, p. 2). Organizations that develop similar online resources in coordination with the Media Authority are Tenk, Dubestemmer, Dembra, the National Digital Learning Arena, the Media Compass, and the Student Channel. Lesson plans, videos and other digital resources are made available online so that schools in all regions have access to this crucial knowledge.

Practical level

Teachers and parents have a critical role in media literacy. Teachers have an established relationship with students from primary care to secondary school. There is a degree of trust and respect between students and teachers. When students are confused, or made emotional, by information they find on the internet, they look to teachers for explanation, knowledge, and understanding. The teacher's superpower is that they have the children's trust for knowledge, according to Sølve Karlsen of Tenk (S. Karlsen, personal communication, October 13, 2023). They do not need to have all the answers, but need to know how to steer conversations about disinformation with students and facilitate how they can research for themselves. Parents also have a role in digital parenting by understanding the

challenges of digital media and having discussions with their children about information they find online.

The critical classroom

In Norway, there is focus on school-aged audiences instead of adult audiences because the classroom is a meeting place where the most amount of people meet on a consistent basis over a long period. It is also an environment where students come in the mood for learning. Students are getting a steady flow of media literacy education that is routinely updated and supported by the state budget and Udir. Similarly, libraries and community centers play an essential role in facilitating media literacy for seniors. Senior adults meet routinely in these environments. With adults, the amount of potential meeting places for media literacy education is too diverse and not consistent over time for media literacy education to have a meaningful and enduring effect in building personal resilience against disinformation. This does not mean that media literacy in Norway has no place with adult audiences. At this time, media literacy in Norway is still developing and requires more funding, manpower, and evaluation to determine how to extend media literacy promotion to adult audiences effectively (S. Karlsen, personal communication, October 13, 2023).

Civilian organizations

The National Digital Learning Arena is a collaboration among counties and is a leading producer of digital learning resources for secondary education. This organization was created to make knowledge freely available, inclusive, and of good quality. Online media literacy resources are created in coordination with the Media Authority and is distributed at the regional level (NDLA, n.d.).

Additional organizations that provide online media literacy resources include, the Media Compass, The Student Channel and the Dembra organization. The Media Compass is in collaboration with the Norwegian Media Business Association to provide teachers with media literacy competence plans (Mediekompasset, n.d.). The student channel is an interactive digital resource channel with a repository of media literacy resources. Schools must pay for student log-ins. The Dembra organization offers guidance, courses, and online resources to prevent prejudice, xenophobia, racism, and extremism. Dembra views media literacy as critical for preventing undemocratic attitudes, promote inclusion, democratic participation, and critical thinking (Dembra, n.d.).

Tenk is a non-profit organization whose primary task is to develop educational resources for primary and secondary schools. Tenk consists of employees with teaching backgrounds. The purpose of this organization is to bridge the gap between media literacy knowledge, the current information environment, and pedagogic methods. This organization was created at the request of Norwegian teachers who felt unsure on how to teach media literacy in a rapidly changing information

environment. In response, Tenk provides free online resources for students, teachers, and parents while in coordination with the Media Authority. The Media Authority delegates some material development to Tenk when it does not have bandwidth or resources. For example, Tenk assists in developing media literacy materials for seniors. Tenk also provides consultations at schools for a fee to cover the costs of training. Tenk does utilize goals or framework set out by the Ministry of Education besides the curriculum. This allows Tenk to have more flexibility in developing materials. It also creates distance from the government so that their media literacy education is not mistaken for government propaganda. However, Tenk is required to report their activities to the government because they receive funding from Udir (S. Karlsen, personal communication, October 13, 2023).

Tenk can reach 8-9,000 students monthly on their student web page. The employees of Tenk have teaching backgrounds who develop media literacy resources that can be understood by children and young people without diluting the severity regarding disinformation. Tenk incorporates lateral reading, a media literacy strategy promoted by Stanford University to help students investigate who is behind unknown online sources by utilizing trusted websites (Stanford University, n.d.). According to developers, it is essential that media literacy is retained with the help of hands-on training. Students need to be equipped with multiple strategies against disinformation. Methods of hands-on training include interactive online lessons, boardgames, online research activities, and discussion cards. Having discussions about media literacy among students, or at home, helps students learn different perspectives and strategies. Discussions provide students with an opportunity to explain their opinions about information they encounter and their personal strategy on how to handle such information. To guide these discussions, Tenk provides talking cards, called “snakk!” cards, for parents to utilize in dialogue regarding disinformation (Tenk, n.d.). The cards help parents keep the conversation positive, no accusations or pointing fingers at the children for their online choices. Instead, the cards have leading questions that the child answers which allows the child to open up to their parents and explain their reasoning. It builds a relationship where it is normal, or routine, to talk about online life and enables parents to talk about difficult or controversial topics in the future.

To reinforce media literacy, Tenk works together with its fact-checking organization, Faktisk. Working together with fact-checking agencies can help the population understand the rhetoric and methods used to fool audiences. To prevent the audiences from associating the first image they see as fact, Faktisk places a big red X on the fake pictures or videos in their assessment posted on their web page. This is done so audiences associate the image as false and pay attention to the agency’s assessment of the information. This method is not a complete solution, but it helps audiences think

critically about which sources or platforms they use. Fact-checking alone is not enough but is part of greater measure to address disinformation (S. Karlsen, personal communication, October 13, 2023).

One of the major challenges with creating media literacy resources is that there is a lot of money poured into fooling people and not enough money poured into combatting disinformation according to Tenk. With disinformation polluting the information environment it can be overwhelming for Tenk's five employees. Tenk utilizes the "train the trainer" principle to alleviate the pressure. Tenk trains teachers to teach other educators and boosts the self-confidence of those teachers. Some teachers are apprehensive about teaching media literacy because they do not have expertise, or they feel that they are too old to talk about media platforms that they rarely use. The "train the trainer" principle dismisses the idea that teachers need to have all the answers and promotes the idea that it is okay to facilitate conversations about disinformation. It is important to facilitate students' own research and help them develop a personal approach. Another consequence of limited funding is that there are not enough resources to make adult specific media literacy training. This is a challenge that still requires evaluation. In the meantime, connecting with parent's through their children's education is the current solution (S. Karlsen, personal communication, October 13, 2023)

6.4 Financing media literacy in Norway

Media literacy in Norway is mainly funded by the state budget. Each organization that receives funding from the state budget receives a budget award letter with objectives, pre-requisites, and requirements. Some award letters are more specific than others. The Media Authority budget award letter is the most descriptive as it is the leading actor for media literacy in Norway.

The Media Authority receives their funding through the Ministry of Culture and Equality. Their budget award letter defines one of the over-arching goals required by the ministry of the Media Authority: "to strengthen critical media understanding in the population, especially among vulnerable groups" (KKLD, 2023, p.2). This goal sets the following supporting goals that the ministry requires from the media authority: contribute to developing active media users that make informed votes and to be a relevant, and visible social actors. Within the budget, the media authority is mandated to use the media research allocation of the budget towards critical media understanding which includes media literacy efforts. In 2023, the media authority was granted 4,180,000 NOK or \$386,731 (KKLD, 2023, p. 10).

Tenk receives their funding through the budget award letter for the Education Directorate. From their budget, Tenk receives 7,150,000 NOK or \$662,093. From the same budget, Dembra receives 14,500,000 NOK or \$1,300,000. However, these funds also support other objectives of Dembra to promote inclusivity and prevent prejudice, racism, and extremism (DKKD, 2023, p. 18-24).

Dubestemmer, which is under the Data Authority, receives its annual funding through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Affairs budget letter. Within this letter, the Data Authority is tasked to protect the population against influence, which it does through their Dubestemmer Project. The letter does not state the exact amount given to Dubestemmer for media literacy. However, the Data Authority did receive a 7,000,000 NOK or \$634,847.50 increase in its current budget (KKD, 2023, p. 4).

6.5 An evaluation on media literacy in Norway.

As previously mentioned, every two years, the Media Authority conducts a survey to research the critical media understanding of the Norwegian population. In 2019, the Media Authority conducted its first report. In the 2021 report, the Media Authority sought to find any development in the critical media understanding of the population. The survey assessed the media literacy levels in Norway but did not do an in-depth assessment of the effectiveness of media literacy against disinformation as it only had one test evaluating the validity of one article. However, the information collected still gives adequate insight into vulnerable target groups, preferred fact-checking methods, and general awareness of false information online. The purpose of these surveys is to determine what kind of knowledge of skills are required to strengthen critical media understanding. The Media Authority utilizes results from these reports as the basis for developing new actions to strengthen critical media understanding (Medietilsynet, 2021c, p. 2).

Information for this assessment was derived from 2,084 respondents from an online survey sent via email. As mentioned previously, the elderly (60-80+ years) and young adults (16-24) believe they have a difficult time discerning disinformation. These are self-assessments based on their own competence, subjective to their experiences and opinion. Still informative and drives the requirement to improve media literacy training for these groups. Respondents were asked what they do when they encounter fake news. The elderly group preferred to consult others (Medietilsynet, 2021a, p. 18). This may be concerning as it may create echo chambers of disinformation if those who are consulted have been deceived by false information. This is probably why more focus in current media literacy training is focused on school curriculum and senior target groups.

In the validity test, respondents were asked if an example of an online headline was true or false. The example was a false article about a local celebrity buying crypto currency. 77% of respondents answered correctly that the article was false. Nine percent did not find anything wrong with the article and 15 % were unsure. Respondents who answered correctly were asked which indications led them to believe the article was false. Few of the responses were that they cross-checked with other websites, there were many spelling errors, the story seemed unrealistic or there was no attribution

in the article. This one article test does not give sufficient data on the effectiveness of the Norwegian population's media literacy. However, it provides insight into which methods are being used (Medietilsynet, 2021a, p. 19).

The survey also asks respondents where they encountered the fake news regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic on the internet. 51% answered yes, 18% answered no, and 30% answered that they were unsure. Respondents were asked where they encountered fake news the most. The top three encounters were: Facebook (35%), non-edited websites (17%), other social media (14%) (Medietilsynet, 2021a, p. 22). Questions like these provide insight on citizens awareness of false information in the websites they routinely visit.

7. Comparison of the Nordic media literacy efforts

To answer the research question, *what are the similarities and differences between the media literacy programs in Finland, Sweden, and Norway*, this section will briefly describe the findings of the media literacy assessments conducted by all three countries. The section will then highlight additional similarities and differences between Finland, Sweden, and Norway in more detail.

There are a few assessments conducted that evaluate media literacy in Finland, Sweden, and Norway in addition to other countries. The assessments evaluate different metrics that are assumed to equate to greater media literacy. One assessment evaluates the predictors that contribute to a high media literacy score and the other assessment evaluates the performance of students when given media literacy related tasks. The ranking of the three countries varies between the two assessments. Nevertheless, they all scored well.

7.1 Media literacy index 2023

The Media Literacy Index was developed by the Open Society Institute to assess the media literacy of European countries in 2017. In 2023, the index evaluated to a total of 41 countries. The current study found that countries in Northern and Western Europe have a higher resilience to fake news. The index does not test the media literacy of the population with fake news examples. Instead, the index ranks countries based on predictors of media literacy. These predictors include better education, free media, higher trust in people, and e-participation (the use of ICT). To determine country ranking on media literacy predictors, the index compiled data from Freedom House, World Values Survey,

Reporters Without Borders, and the Program for International School Assessments (PISA) (Lessenski, 2023, p. 3-4). In the overall ranking for media literacy, Finland was ranked 1st, Norway was ranked 3rd, and Sweden was ranked 5th.

In these results, an important commonality is that the Nordic countries scored high in the high level of trust in people indicator category. Norway placed 2nd, with a score of 93 of 100, Finland placed 3rd with a score of 89 of 100, and Sweden placed 4th with a score of 83 of 100 (Lessenski, 2023, p. 16). Declining trust in institutions, people, and journalism is a symptom of disinformation eroding the unity and strength of a society. Many European societies have good education. Perhaps, it is the trust in people that is the catalyst for strengthening resiliency against disinformation. Disinformation, specifically conspiracy theories, proliferate because of distrust in government and journalism. Also, a high trust in people also lends to a willingness to receive education on media literacy from an array of state and non-state organizations. Audiences who are infected with distrust may associate any counter-disinformation measures with state-control or manipulation.

7.2 PISA 2018 Study

In 2018, PISA evaluated 79 countries on the reading fluency of students, with an average age of 15 years. Reading fluency includes the ability to locate information, understand its meaning, and evaluate the quality and credibility of the information. This study placed emphasis on evaluating a student's ability to discern fact from false information because reading in the digital environment has become more challenging with the increasing generation and consumption of online content. According to PISA, this change in the information environment has contributed to the increase of fake news, misinformation, and a post-truth climate. PISA believes that students must rely on school to learn media literacy skills to prepare young people for an increasingly uncertain and volatile world. Therefore, this study aims to assess if the media literacy skills learned in schools are having an impact in identifying false information in digital content (OECD, 2021, p. 16-18, 26).

In the study, students were presented with a series of unrelated reading passages with various general topics. After reading, students answered a series of question assessing their traditional comprehension. Students were also presented with scenarios with multiple texts to test their ability to evaluate the integration of multiple texts, their ability to evaluate online content, or corroborate information across multiple texts (OECD, 2021, p. 28).

Though the PISA study evaluated multiple aspects associated with reading comprehension, the data on distinguishing facts from opinions is of the most relevance to media literacy education. The figure below (Figure 9) evaluates the ability to distinguish fact from opinions and the students access to media literacy training. Specifically, how to detect biased information. The data indicates that, of the

three Nordic countries in this thesis, Sweden scores the highest, Finland second and Norway scoring below average. What is interesting however, is that Russia scored higher than Norway, and the U.S scored higher than all three countries. This study is five years old and the scoring may be different if the analysis were conducted today (OECD, 2021, p. 46).

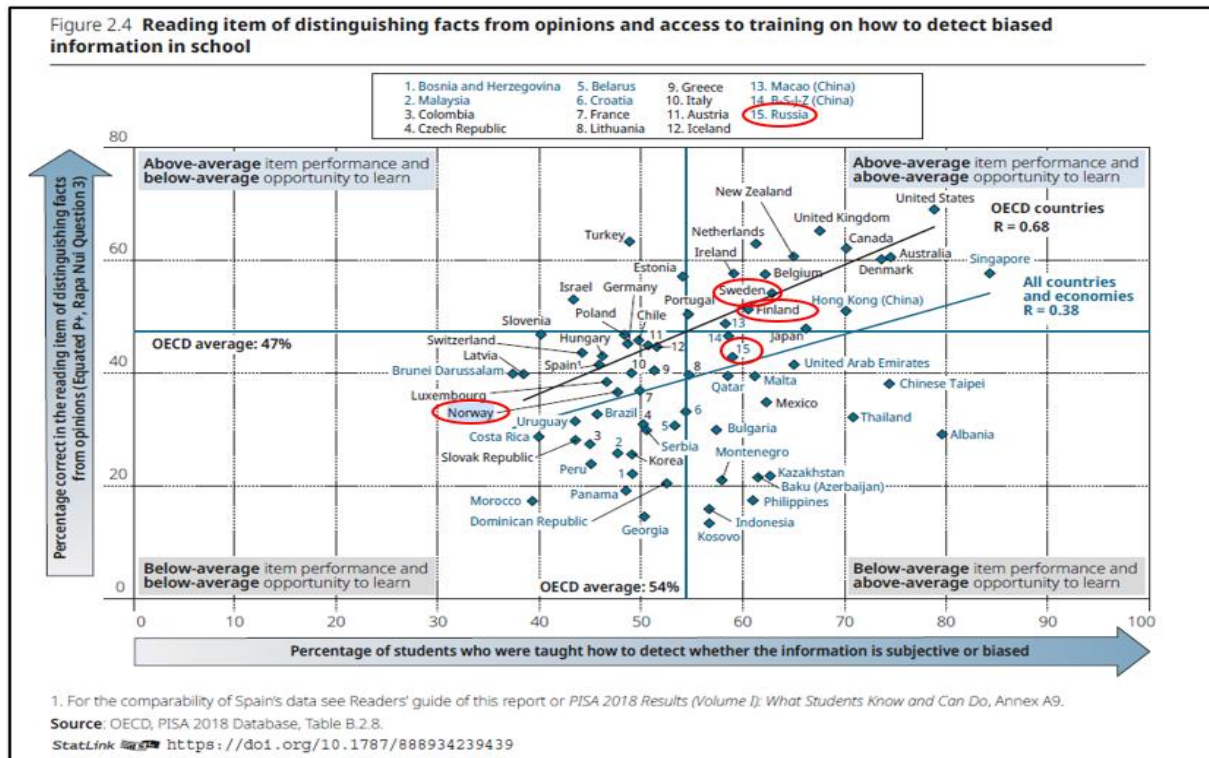


Figure 9, PISA 2018, p. 46

In Figure 10, Sweden and Finland show scores above average for discerning fact from opinion and reading comprehension. Norway scored below average for discerning fact from opinion yet had above average reading performance (OECD, 2021, p. 47).

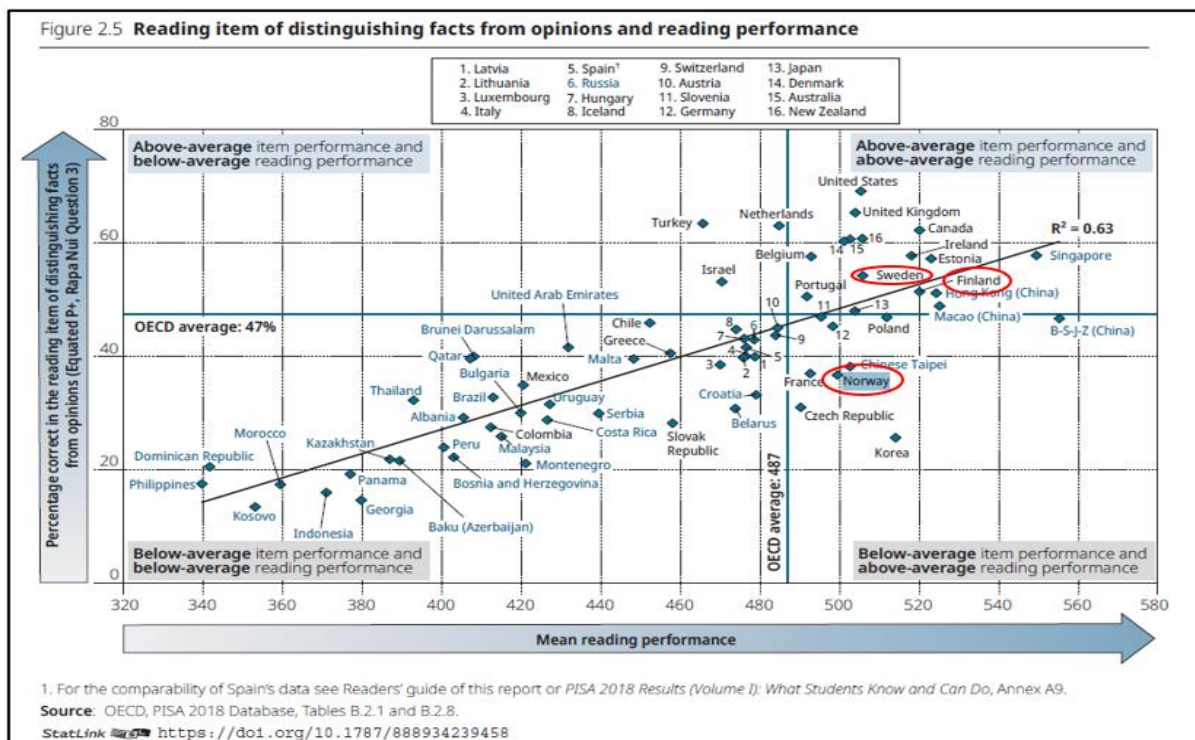


Figure 10, PISA 2018, p. 47

It is important to note that this study evaluates reading of texts and does not evaluate pictures or videos. It evaluates one of many ways false information is presented with a very narrow age group. However, the data still provides insight into the vulnerabilities that exist among students. As mentioned previously, the Norwegian Media Authority identified young people ages 16-24 as one of the most vulnerable groups to disinformation. Though the PISA study evaluated 15-year-olds, it can be argued that ages 15-24 may need improved education regarding rhetoric and methods of appeals often found in disinformation.

7.3 In-depth comparisons of similarities and differences

There are many differences between the media literacy programs of the three countries. However, there are some significant similarities that contribute to strengthening the media literacy and the cognitive defense of their populations. In this section, similarities and differences will be discussed in the context of the analytical categories used in this study: historical background, policy, roles, responsibilities and implementation, and financing. This section will identify the significance behind these factors and how they contribute to effective media literacy efforts.

Historical background

The historical background sheds light on common motivations for media literacy efforts. The most common motivation was to enhance democratic participation of citizens and promote healthy discourse. Media literacy education teaches citizens where to find information, how to critically analyze sources, and how to discern fact from opinion. These skills develop informed voters and promote the tolerance of different perspectives. A second motivation that is strongly connected to the first is to directly combat disinformation. Disinformation can have a negative effect on public discourse by inciting hate speech or fostering distrust in government and fellow citizens. A third motivation is to promote healthy online behavior. There are increasing challenges with cyber-bullying, poor mental health of internet users, and re-sharing of misleading information online. These motivations have prompted these three countries to increase support for media literacy to improve critical media understanding and ethical digital judgement.

An additional motivation, that is common to Finland and Sweden, is that they were both directed by EU directive 2018/1808, article 33a, to promote and take measures to develop media literacy. This gave the promotion of media literacy some legitimacy within the national governments of Finland and Sweden. Consequentially, a natural web of media literacy develops as more and more EU countries respond to this directive.

Policy

Though Finland is the only country in this study with a media literacy policy, it is significant that Sweden and Norway have media literacy and associated skills included in their digitalization strategy documents and other steering documents from the government. The fact that all three countries have policy, strategy, or steering documents to drive media literacy, is significant. Without such documents, media literacy efforts would be aimless with no requirement for proper management.

All three of these countries view media literacy from a holistic perspective. It is not the problem of one department. Multiple departments in the government have a stake in addressing the dangers of disinformation. To reinforce this principle, Finland and Sweden use policy or media literacy promotion document to characterize each stakeholders' role, responsibility, or relationship in supporting media literacy. This establishes a hierarchy of responsibilities and structures cross-government coordination. With Norway, there is a chart in the "Rett på Nett" strategy that identifies actors but only at the national level. The strategy only identifies tasks for the Media Authority and the Children and Family Department unlike Sweden and Finland who clearly identify roles, responsibilities, and relationships of other government departments (Den norske regjeringen, 2021, p. 36).

Finland and Sweden recognize similar challenges and shortfalls in their policy or media literacy promotion document. They both recognize an increasing distrust in media and a need to rehabilitate the relationship between users and the media. They recognize the need for expanding the training for all age groups. Norway has not specifically stated this in their strategy documents. They do acknowledge in their post-assessment report that media literacy education must expand to vulnerable age groups, such as young adults and seniors. All three countries recognize new challenges that media literacy can address. These challenges include new digital technologies and trends such as A.I., algorithms, cyber-bullying, hate speech, and disinformation.

With challenges and shortfalls, there is a need for improved competence in media literacy to address these items. All three countries support coordination with researchers in media literacy in their government documents. This is to update knowledge on trends, increase awareness in the academic community, and develop pedagogic methods that are effective in building individual resiliency against disinformation. It is related to another similarity. The policy documents echo the need for continuous and substantial cooperation across the government and sectors. Cooperation increases knowledge and reduces redundancies.

Roles, responsibilities, and implementation.

This section contains a significant number of factors relating to the roles, responsibilities, and implementation of media literacy as these factors build an understanding of what an effective media literacy effort looks like. The first similarity is that an important stakeholder for all three countries is the Department of Education as the main driver in implementing media literacy in curriculum and providing resources for teachers and students. This department oversees the next similarity, that these countries have a national, core curriculum that includes media literacy. The national curriculum ensures quality and equal education for all citizens. In Norway, public education must be of good quality everywhere to reduce the desire for families to seek private education (Ellingsen & Mac Donald, 2021, p.43). This fosters a society of inclusivity, equality, and diversity. A goal that each of these three countries strive for. With a national curriculum, the education department can direct all schools to include the same media literacy objectives in the teaching plans. This reduces disparity in media literacy efforts among the schools. As the information environment evolves quickly, lesson plans, digital resources, and curriculum material must be updated to meet new challenges. With a national, core curriculum, resources and new standards can be updated together. If curriculum standards were decentralized, there could be a delay in some regions to update the curriculum which would cause variations in media literacy competence across the student population. Media literacy

in national, core curriculum is crucial because schools are the key starting place for citizens to develop their media literacy. A useful and fundamental skill for the rest of their lives.

Another commonality within the national, core curriculum is that fundamentals in media literacy begin in pre-school and sometimes earlier. This is done to help develop the digital skills of students early on. However, there is a strong emphasis for students to build a healthy relationship with media. Establishing a healthy relationship with media requires self-awareness, general awareness of the media environment, and critical reasoning skills. A healthy relationship incorporates responsible internet use. Responsible internet use includes click-restraint, restraint in re-posting false information, and reducing time spent online.

Teaching media literacy fundamentals early is another similarity. This practice can enable students to build their media literacy at every grade with re-occurring and updated lessons throughout their academic journey that spans over 13 years. Re-occurring training over a long period strengthens the student's inoculation against disinformation and diminish skill decay. When they graduate, students will know where to find updated resources on identifying false information. Students are better equipped to face the unstable information environment by the time they become voting age and actively participate in a democratic society.

When multiple departments are involved there needs to be a centralized coordinator. Each country has an identified organization that is responsible for the implementation and promotion of media literacy. All three countries utilize organisations from their culture departments. Promotion of culture is tied to the promotion of audiovisual media education, which includes media literacy. Finland utilizes their audiovisual institute while Sweden and Norway utilize their media authority as the responsible organization. All three organizations are the main party responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of media literacy. A benefit to these organizations is that they serve as a touch point for educators and stakeholders to help them navigate the impressive and vast number of online resources and research related to media literacy. Finland, for example, sees value in coordination and networking in to address fragmented media literacy efforts (MoEC, 2019, p. 28). An additional benefit of these organizations is that they conduct studies to assess the status of media literacy and identify shortfalls. A productive media literacy program must include mechanisms to address shortfalls to make improvements.

Another commonality that strengthens the media literacy efforts of Finland, Sweden and Norway is the large amounts of digital resources available for teachers, parents, and students. Videos, suggested lesson plans, games, and more are available on official websites from the Departments of Education and Culture. In coordination with the responsible media literacy organization, several non-

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profit organizations and media companies provide resources online. This cross-sector collaboration to create online resources not only increases the number of tools available but integrates the expertise of journalists, media companies, and educators.

Just as online resources support media literacy efforts, the library is a crucial actor in promoting media literacy. All three countries place a strong emphasis on utilizing libraries to promote media literacy. School libraries reinforce what is taught in the classrooms by providing space, resources, and additional guidance to students to help them master their media literacy. Public libraries expand media literacy efforts to regional and local levels. More importantly, libraries assist in reaching target groups such as adults and seniors.

A minor commonality, yet an interesting factor, is the pedagogic approach to learning. Sweden and Finland view collaborative learning is an ideal method for adults. Peer activities and discussions encourages participation and allows the lesson to adapt to various ages and learning capacities (Kanerva & Oksanen-Sarela, 2021, p. 4). In the courses provided by the Swedish Psychological Defense Agency, training is conducted in discussion groups. This method was chosen to allow students to discuss their opinions and findings with each other. The goal is to maximize discussion time and minimize instructor's speaking time. At the end of the course, all participants write a short paper on media literacy to demonstrate learning. This is a way to give the students ownership over their learning and facilitate social interaction. This also helps instructors accommodate different learning styles (J. Sundstrand & P. Noren, personal communication, August 24, 2023). In Norway, collaborative learning is used in schools to remove the notion that the teacher must be the expert in media literacy to teach media literacy. Some teachers feel unsure about their knowledge on the latest social media trends and its dangers. Promoting lesson plans that encourage collaborative learning enables students to think critically through the lesson and allows the teacher to assume the role of a facilitator not an expert. Peer activities also removes anonymity. Participants must defend their reasoning, and learn other's perspectives, face-to-face.

Another common approach is the incorporation of parents in developing media literacy in children. Parents can also be impactful in fostering media literacy. Utilizing the media literacy talking cards, parents can ask their children what they think about disinformation, what it looks like, and what to do when met with false information. This helps parents understand the online risks their children face with disinformation while at the same time build their own personal knowledge about disinformation and media literacy. As a secondary effect more adults, i.e., parents are exposed to media literacy resources and have potential to share knowledge with their adult peers. Currently there are seven pilot studies in EU countries into parental dialogue on disinformation. Though the

studies are on-going, they are producing good results and is a motivating factor for the inclusion of media literacy resources for parents (S. Karlsen, personal communication, October 13, 2023).

The Justice Department in Finland and Sweden have a role in promoting media literacy but with a different purpose. The Justice Department in Finland promotes media literacy to work against hate speech often found in disinformation. The department also aims to make citizens more aware of targeted and malign influence in elections, which can erode public confidence in democratic processes. In contrast, the Justice Department of Sweden promotes media literacy to build public resiliency to disinformation in support of a civil defense of Sweden.

Another commonality is that both Sweden and Norway support media literacy with other cognitive security measures to counter disinformation. Other measures include fact-checking websites and communication in the news about the newest threats such as A.I. created images or videos in circulation. They monitor the latest trends in disinformation and proactively inform the public. For example, the Swedish Psychological Defense Agency utilizes its operations department to monitor these trends. In Norway, Tenk utilizes a service called Storyboard to monitor the information landscape to keep their media literacy lessons up to date and keep the public informed on the latest methods used in disinformation (S. Karlsen, personal communication, October 13, 2023). The public can use this knowledge together with their critical reasoning skills acquired from media literacy education to prepare themselves against disinformation. Media literacy is not viewed as a stand-alone solution but a bedrock that is reinforced by other measures.

Media literacy and other measures are important to national security. Sweden views these measures to bolster the public's psychological defense. In Norway, media literacy and other measures are being considered by the government to support their Total Defense Concept. The Norwegian parliament believes the information environment is a vulnerability in the Total Defense Concept that must be addressed (S. Karlsen, personal communication, October 13, 2023).

Finland and Sweden are EU members that have the EU directive 2018-1808 to motivate and reinforce their task to have a media literacy program. This draws support from various government departments and organizations to promote media literacy. The EU provides some financing and fosters development in media literacy with their various programs and organizations such as the Media Literacy Expert Group and the Media and Information Task Force. Though Norway is not part of the EU, Norway does cooperate in the EU's pilot study regarding parents' role in fostering media literacy. This highlights another commonality. Sweden and Norway promote the involvement of parents/guardians in children's media literacy development. A method that has presented positive

results in the EU's pilot study of parent's role in media literacy (S. Karlsen, personal communication, October 13, 2023).

Financing of media literacy.

A nationally driven media literacy effort and incorporation in national curriculum will have financing from the national level. The first commonality in financing is that the majority of each of the three country's media literacy efforts receive funding from the state. Predominately through their respective ministries of education and culture. The Ministry of Education provides funding for curriculum, libraries, and resources for teachers. The Ministry of Culture supports many media literacy efforts to include research, training, and resources for teachers. With Finland, funding is consolidated and diversified under guidelines within their media literacy policy. However, in Sweden and Norway, funding is also available through the administrative appropriations of various government agencies involved with media literacy. Other government organizations that support media literacy, do so from their budgets. In Sweden, there is no specification for media literacy in the government budget (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 21). Whereas in Norway, media literacy has specified allocation in the budget award letters. Perhaps specifying media literacy in government budgets is something to be replicated by governments? Specification for media literacy with guidelines and reporting requirements in a publicly available budget letter promotes transparency and may foster trust between constituents and the government regarding the national media literacy efforts.

An additional source of external financing is support from the EU. Finland and Sweden receive financial support from the EU through the Creative Europe program. Within the current 2021-2027 program, there is a specific emphasis on media literacy that aims to strengthen EU citizens critical understanding of media and foster healthy media use. Funding provided from this program will be allocated to projects that contribute to the exchange of knowledge and experience with media literacy and its development. The funding also supports the use of tools and materials to enhance media literacy education (Statens Medieråd, 2023a, p. 21).

Within the EU, the European Commission provides financing to the Nordic Observatory for digital media and information disorders (NORDIS). This is a project in collaboration with the European Digital Media Observatory to identify, analyze, and prevent disinformation online. The project includes stakeholders from Finland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Finland contributes to this project by developing "digital information literacy" through the University of Helsinki and their fact-checking service, *Faktabaari*. This project was awarded an initial capital of €1.5 million by the EC (Faktabaari, 2021). The goal of this research is to consolidate the latest research on media literacy

and fact-checking. By consolidating research und this network of Nordic countries, resource costs are reduced, knowledge is shared, and media literacy gains greater recognition.

8. Conclusion and summary of takeaways

This thesis has set out to answer the research question, *“what are the similarities and differences between the media literacy programs in Finland, Sweden, and Norway?”* The purpose of this study is to identify motivations, methods, and other factors that may contribute to the excellent media literacy of these three countries. This study also set out to discover how media literacy is promoted in a way that may foster participation and acceptance of media literacy efforts. Disinformation and harmful narratives are a threat to democracy and national security. Therefore, understanding how other countries promote media literacy and ultimately strengthen their cognitive resiliency is important.

Through the analysis and discussion of several aspects of each of these three countries’ media literacy efforts, it is possible to conclude that nationally driven promotion of media literacy with a national policy/strategy and media literacy incorporation in core curriculum stand out as the key elements to their success. Promotion through national policy/strategy gives media literacy legitimacy and provides the support and oversight required to drive implementation at the practical level. Incorporation in national curriculum introduces media literacy early on in life and normalizes the subject as an essential skillset. The evaluation of the historical background of these efforts revealed that the common motivations for media literacy efforts were to educate and equip the population to deal with advancements in the digital environment but most importantly to safeguard democracy, civil discourse, and free speech. Interviews conducted revealed that media literacy efforts are not perfect and resilience against disinformation is not a guarantee. Reaching adults and vulnerable target audiences is still a challenge in these three countries. Recognition and support for media literacy is still not widespread. Finland has recommended that targeted communications towards skeptical audiences to create understanding and promote a positive narrative on media literacy.

The evaluation of policy and strategy documents revealed the emphasis of cross-governmental and cross-sectoral cooperation in promoting media literacy. The effects of disinformation and harmful narratives impacts different facets of society. This study reinforced the idea that media literacy should be viewed and promoted from a whole-of-government and holistic perspective. These

documents showed the value of incorporating media literacy into a national curriculum so that associated skillsets can develop and be reinforced over time. Students mature into adults with a fundamental knowledge of media literacy and will become members of a population more accepting of future media literacy efforts. This concept, however, cannot be replicated in all countries. The U.S. federal government, for example, is restricted by its Constitution to create a national curriculum. A solution to this limitation could be a national forum or network as these three countries have done. This can consolidate efforts, share knowledge, and promote media literacy without impeding on state responsibility for curriculum. The information environment will continue to evolve, and harmful information will become a greater challenge. A steadfast commitment to coordinate, collaborate, and implement quality media literacy education is paramount to shaping a well-functioning democracy and building a resilient population.

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10. Attachment 1

Assessment of processing of personal data from SIKT.



[Notification form](#) / [Masteroppgaver](#) / Assessment

Assessment of processing of personal data

Reference number 126271	Assessment type Standard	Date 26.09.2023
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Title
Masteroppgaver

Institution responsible for the project
Forsvarets Høgskole / Forsvarets stabsskole

Project leader
Paal Hilde

Student
Melissa Gianetto

Project period
15.08.2023 - 20.11.2023

Categories of personal data
General

Legal basis
Consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 6 nr. 1 a)

The processing of personal data is lawful, so long as it is carried out as stated in the notification form. The legal basis is valid until 20.11.2023.

[Notification Form](#)

Comment

ABOUT OUR ASSESSMENT

Data Protection Services has an agreement with the institution where you are a student or a researcher. As part of this agreement, we provide guidance so that the processing of personal data in your project is lawful and complies with data protection legislation. We have now assessed that you have legal basis to process the personal data.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES

You must store, send and secure the collected data in accordance with your institution's guidelines. This means that you must use data processors (and the like) that your institution has an agreement with (i.e. cloud storage, online survey, and video conferencing providers).

Our assessment presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data.

NOTIFY CHANGES

If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project, it may be necessary to notify us. This is done by updating the information registered in the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes: <https://sikt.no/en/notify-changes-notification-form>

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT

We will follow up the progress of the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded.

Good luck with the project!