Media Freedom Literacy in South Caucasus

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Current state of media literacy in South Caucasus

- **Lack of strategic approach** to development of media literacy across the region. There is no country in the region with comprehensive policies/strategies for developing MIL in a systematic way.

- Media and information literacy **is mostly left on the civil societ**y and enthusiasts in the sector.

- **Significant increase in programs on non-formal media literacy**, turning the fight against dis/misinformation into a unique self-organization process led by civil society.

Civil society initiatives/case
Interactive performance for kids at schools and libraries by Public Journalism center
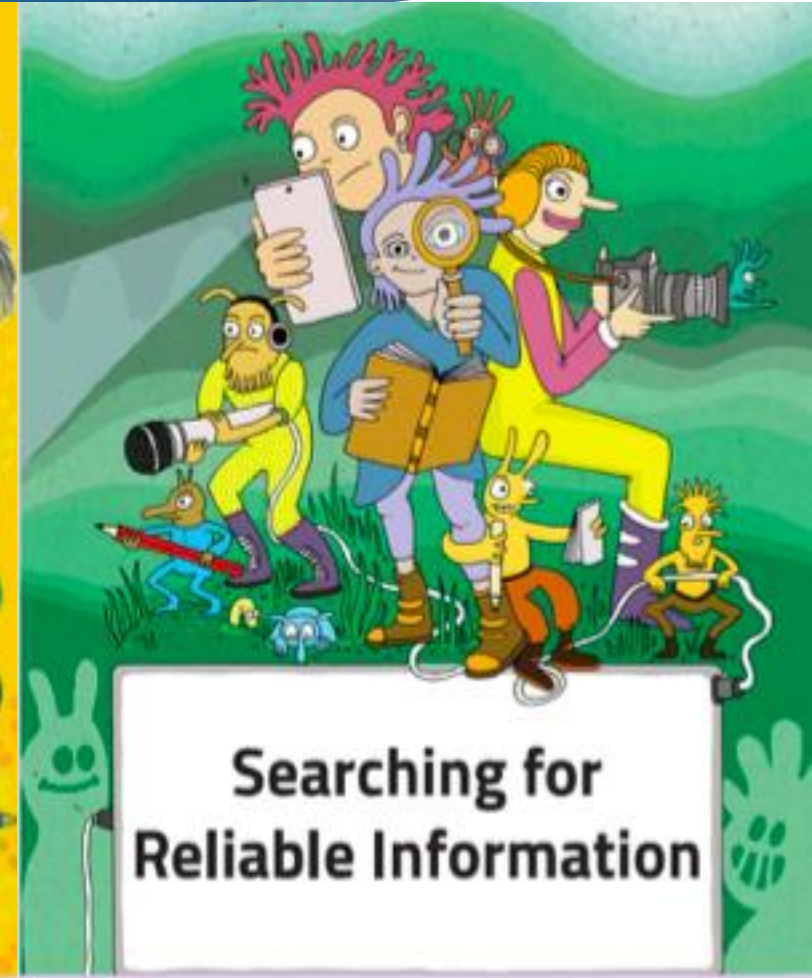

Interactive participatory performance

Civil society initiatives/case
Fact checking laboratories in universities launched by FOICA
Teaching manual by PJC and MIC

Mapping MIL initiatives in the region

▶ **The main disadvantages** of non-formal media literacy initiatives of CSOs are lack of comprehensiveness, sustainability and independent resources, lack of coordination and strategic directions

▶ **Media outlets launched fact checking units** to detect and analyze fake news as well as to inform the public about the false narratives and sources of disinformation. However proper partnership is not in place.

Mapping MIL initiatives in the region

▶ **Gaps in journalism education** at universities: journalism learning theory, outdated curriculums, lack of delivery of practical skills.

▶ The role of the **media regulatory bodies**, which may play a vital role in the development of media literacy, **is not well recognized** and deployed in all countries of the region

▶ **The public broadcasters are not fully engaged** in the MIL process.

▶ **Transparency of the media ownership** is an important reform which is underway in some countries of the region.

Recommendations

▶ Building of a **cooperative and inclusive framework** and consultative MIL process between the state, civil society and the media sector.

▶ Development of a comprehensive **media literacy policy/strategy** and a detailed action plan using an intersectoral, human rights-based approach.

▶ Advancement of **media ownership transparency** and the consequent enforcement.

Recommendations

▶ **Promotion of self-regulation** and the implementation of co-regulatory mechanisms as a strong basis for MIL promotion.

▶ **The media regulatory bodies** - The regulators have a potential to take an active role in working on media literacy, considering their important social role with certain aspects of media content regulation and protection of minors and consumers.

▶ **Public media -** Bring high-grade explanatory, high-quality, educational and insightful content on political, social, health, and other relevant topics in public media to help people obtain fact-based, verified and reliable information.
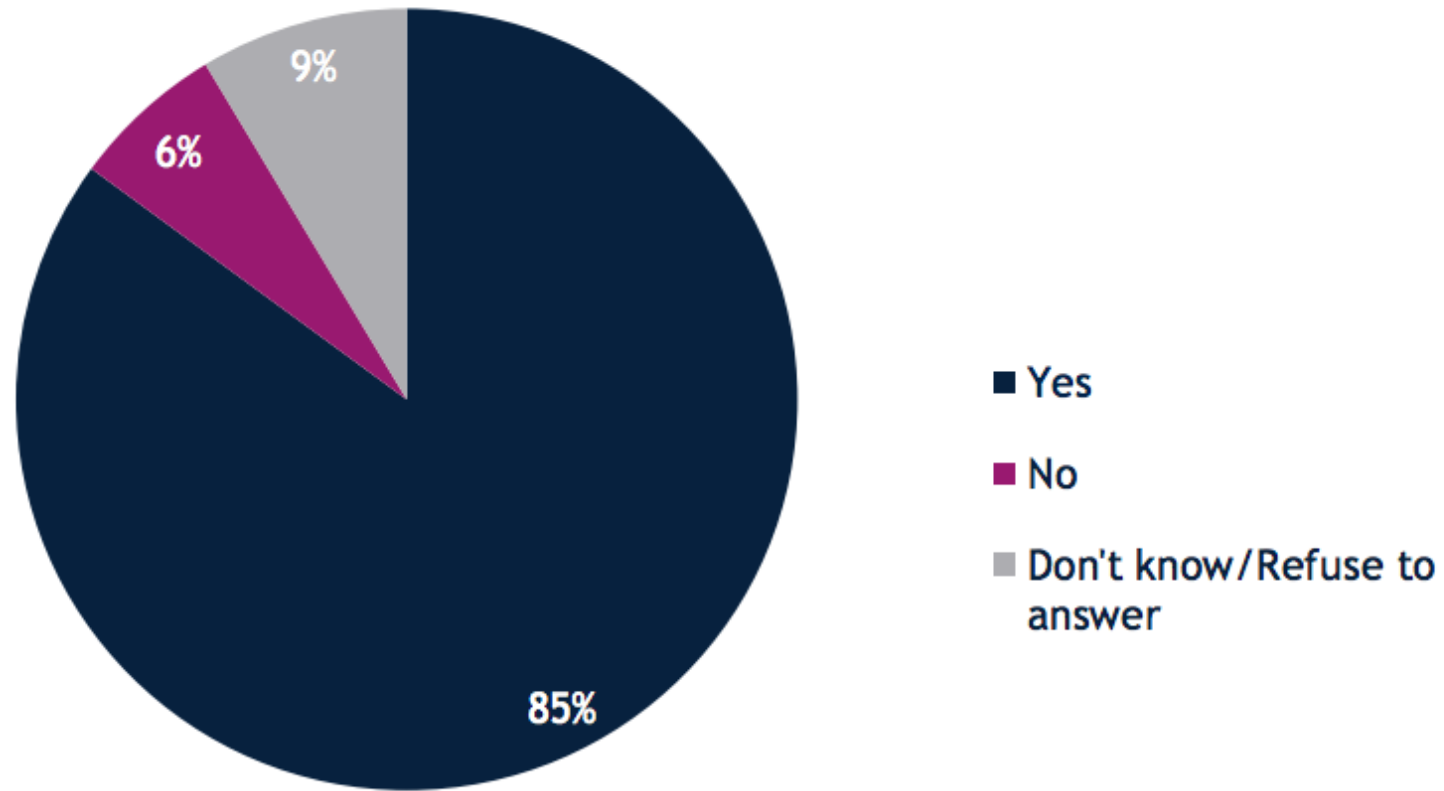
Recommendations

Civil society Role

▶ **Work intensively and provide inclusive trainings for the groups excluded** from general education which are particularly vulnerable to current challenges

▶ **Support independent factchecking initiatives**. Facilitate the creation of an independent regional network of fact-checkers to establish common working methods, exchange best practices, achieve broad coverage across the region, and participate in joint factchecking and related activities, strengthen capacities to identify and expose disinformation threats targeting national audiences and facilitate cross-border cooperation.

▶ **Assess and analyze** the development of media literacy and identify challenges in SC countries based on proper qualitative and quantitative surveys.

Recommendations

Government Role

► **Refrain from heavy-handed interference** which might result in disproportionate restriction of freedom of expression and media.

► **integrate MIL concepts in the national educational standards and curricula** and ensure that all teachers have necessary knowledge and training skills to deliver a qualified media literacy knowledge to children in educational system.

► **Ensure proper implementation of proactive transparency** of government agencies to provide people with accurate and reliable source of information.

► **Adopt a national policy/strategy** on MIL through an inclusive process, encouraging its development, creating a platform for cooperation and synergy within the wider social community

Should the government take measures in tackling disinformation?

- 85%
- 9%
- 6%

Legend:
- Yes
- No
- Don't know/Refuse to answer

Recommendations

Government role

▶ **Encourage** all media, to promote media literacy through various policies, strategies and activities, whereby public media services and community media could play a special role due to their obligations and goals.

▶ **Develop** a strategic approach towards reforming the media legislation in order to enable a healthy media environment. This strategic approach should be developed in an inclusive manner and be based on the carefully analyzed needs and gaps of the field. Meanwhile, all fragmental and minor legislative amendments should be stopped.

▶ **Finally,** it is the government's role to create a more favorable environment for professional media by launching diversified initiatives for financial sustainability, technical assistance, and comprehensive legislative reform.

THANK YOU

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