



Opening statement for the Committee meeting in public session to discuss online safety, online disinformation and media literacy on Wednesday 6th December 2023.

The National Audiovisual Institute of Finland (KAVI) would like to thank the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media for the invitation to the Committee meeting and the possibility to discuss online safety, online disinformation and media literacy.

Mandate and policy for media literacy

The Finnish National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI) is legally obligated to advance media education, consequently promoting media literacy. KAVI's Department for Media Education and Audiovisual Media also functions as an independent media regulatory authority tasked with overseeing age restrictions for audiovisual programs.

KAVI is responsible for implementing the National Media Education Policy¹, which asserts that media literacy is a civic skill for all. KAVI approaches media literacy comprehensively, encompassing skills to comprehend and analyse media, create media, and engage in a secure and responsible manner in media environments. This approach also considers the perspective of active citizenship across all these aspects.

It is hard to stress the importance of having a national policy for promoting media literacy. The Policy is the backbone for all media literacy work done in Finland and supports different organisations in their work for promoting media literacy.

The Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government² states that *critical media literacy and awareness of cyber risks in order to reinforce broad social resilience* should be boosted.

KAVI's media education targets diverse groups, with a particular emphasis on professional educators dedicated to fostering media literacy. Additionally, KAVI collaborates extensively with national and international experts and other Finnish governmental organizations and non-governmental organisations. Moreover, KAVI engages directly with citizens, such as children's guardians, by providing communications and booklets.

Our ultimate goal is to promote peaceful society, functioning democracy with stable economy and by doing so we work for good life for everyone.

Examples of successful initiatives

¹ Media Literacy in Finland – National Media Education Policy <https://medialukutai-tosuomessa.fi/en/guidelines/>

² <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/governments/government-programme#/>

I would like to point out some examples of successful media literacy initiatives in Finland. KAVI has been coordinating the Media Literacy Week³ since 2012. The Week is promoting media literacy and developing educators' media education competences. The Finnish Games Week is promoting game literacy and positive game culture. Media Literacy School -website⁴ is collecting and sharing teaching and learning resources for media education for free. One fairly recent initiative has been "Media Literacy Coffee Breaks" for government civil servants. These unofficial gatherings bring together experts from different governmental sectors to discuss about current issues on media literacy, following Chatham House rules. This way we have managed to create cross-sectoral cooperation within the government structures.

Some reflections on international media literacy debate

There is an ongoing obsession with measurement of success of media education or media education projects or programs. To some extent I understand the need to find out whether the money spent has been spent wisely and if there are any tangible results. However, it is unclear what is being measured and how. Typically, the measurements we see focus on technical skills, access, other external factors, but not on critical thinking skills. Another problem is the solutionism, where media literacy is seen as the solution to all problems in the society. However much I believe that promoting media literacy is really important, I don't believe that we can solve all the problems we have by only investing in media literacy.

The last point I would like to make is to emphasise that achieving results in media literacy requires policy support, time, patience, and resources. And if you think media education is expensive – try ignorance.

Thank you!

³ <https://mediataitoviikko.fi/in-english/>

⁴ <https://www.mediataitokoulu.fi/en/>