The role of civil society organisations in promoting media literacy, transliteracy and media and information literacy in EU

Igor Kanižaj
University of Zagreb

ABSTRACT Civil society has an important role in our societies. Its importance has been recognized in political science, media studies, communication science, sociology and in a multidisciplinary approach. From previous research we know that civic engagement is in a positive correlation to media literacy (ML) (Frau-Meigs & Torrent, 2009). Civil society organisations (CSOs) are one of the most important media literacy stake-holders in most of our societies. In this study we examine and analyze the results of two European research projects that analyzed in detail the CSOs' role in the European context. The ANR TRANSLIT scientific research project is one of the projects analyzing the role of CSOs in media and information literacy. Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28 (European Audiovisual Observatory, Council of Europe) is the second one. Both projects included more than 100 European scientists and experts. We analyze the scope of CSOs activities, recognized as key stake-holders. Furthermore, we question the role they have in relation to other actors and sectors. We also discuss the historical differences and similarities in neighbouring countries. This article also calls for the necessity to indicate possible risks in CSOs activities and policies. In order to coordinate CSOs activities in the EU we offer a new model based upon six key elements of CSOs, as stake-holders in ML and MIL, in the EU and abroad.
KEY WORDS: CSOs, Media Literacy, Media and Information Literacy, Digital Literacy, public policies, Europe

RESUMEN La sociedad civil tiene un papel importante en nuestras sociedades. Su importancia ha sido reconocida en las ciencias políticas, en los estudios mediáticos, las ciencias de la comunicación, la sociología y en un enfoque multidisciplinario. De investigaciones previas, sabemos que el compromiso cívico está en una correlación positiva con la alfabetización mediática (Frau-Megis & Torrent, 2009). Las organizaciones de la sociedad civil (OSC) son una de las partes interesadas más importantes de la alfabetización mediática en la mayoría de nuestras sociedades. En este artículo examinamos y analizamos los resultados de dos proyectos de investigación europeos que han analizado en detalle el papel de las OSC en el contexto europeo. El proyecto de investigación científica ANR TRANSLIT es uno de los proyectos que analiza el papel de las OSC en alfabetización mediática e informacional. Mapeo de prácticas y acciones de alfabetización mediática en la UE-28 (Observatorio Europeo del Audiovisual, Consejo de Europa) ha publicado el segundo proyecto, Ambos proyectos incluyen más de 100 científicos y expertos europeos. En este estudio analizaremos el alcance de las actividades de las OSC, reconocidas como partes interesadas claves, además de cuestionar el papel que tienen en relación con otros actores y sectores. También expondremos las diferencias históricas y las similitudes en los países vecinos. Este artículo también exige la necesidad de indicar posibles riesgos en las actividades y políticas de las OSC. Para coordinar las actividades de las OSC en la UE, ofrecemos un nuevo modelo basado en seis elementos clave de las OSC, como partes interesadas en alfabetización mediática y AMI, en la UE y en el exterior.
PALABRAS CLAVE: OSCs, alfabetización mediatica, alfabetización mediatica e informacional, alfabetización digital, políticas públicas, Europa

1. Introduction, theoretical foundations and methodology

Civil society organisations (CSOs) have always been recognized as relevant stakeholders of media and digital literacy in our societies. They are seen as the cornerstones of civic agency "premised on people being able to see themselves as participants, that find engagement meaningful, and that they experience motivation via the interplay of reason and passion" (Dahlgren 2009, p. 102). It is hard to think about societies without including civic cultures as "political patterns in

Dirección de correspondencia:
Igor Kanižaj, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Political Science, Department for Journalism and Media Production. Lepušićeva 6, 10 000 Zagreb, Croatia. E-mail: ikanizaj@fpzg.hr. ORCID: 0000-0002-8807-3655.

which identities of citizenship, and the foundation for civic agency are embedded" (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 102). But it is not just about political patterns. Civil society is also present in different concepts and models in sociology, communication science and cultural studies. They are also at the very heart of social capital (Putnam, 1993). As individuals, coming from different backgrounds we ought not to "bowl alone" but in joint activities in different contexts, networks and settings. "Empowering citizens to speak out, solve problems and use their voices in effective ways is a prerequisite for engaged citizenship in digital culture" (Mihailidis, 2014, p. 151). In comparison with most of other stakeholders and actors such as state authorities, the public sector, academic research institutions, the media industry and the private sector, as listed in the ANR TRANSLIT research project (2017), CSOs in most of the European countries remain the most cohesive societal actor in media literacy (ML) and media and information literacy (MIL).

"The concept of civil society refers to a social context in which there is a broad range, great diversity, and high density of social networks and formal and informal organisations" (Newton, 2001, p. 208). In reflecting the role of CSOs, Newton (2001, p. 202) connects civil society with trust as the main component of social capital and argues that voluntary associations create the bonds of social solidarity that are the basis for civil society and democracy (2001, p. 206). The role of civil society through its emphasis of social ties "that involve social values, trust, and reciprocity; they are both and individual and a social good" (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 107). Intrinsic values are probably by far the most important characteristic of civil societies; in particular, intrinsic values are fundamental for civic engagement. Furthermore, being intrinsic is a universal value, existing to a certain extent in every political and societal system. It has the possibility to overcome most of the cleavages in our societies, and is able to bind and bond different actors.

One of predominant characteristic of the civic sector throughout Europe is "engagement" even in those countries where the main preconditions for civil society development are missing or tend to become an obstacle. "Civic engagement is positively correlated with ML and generates «experiences of influence in society» that suggests cross-generational strategies for building dialogue across different sectors and age-groups in a given society." (Frau-Meigs & Torrent, 2009, p. 20). From this perspective, a society that lacks fundamental values nourished by civil society actors cannot provide a sustainable platform for dialogue across sectors and generations.

The role of civil society was identified by Hallin and Mancini in their media system models (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, 2011) and subsequently adjusted within the ANR TRANSLIT research for interpreting the role of non-governmental actors in MIL. Matović, Juraite and Gutierrez (2017) researched the levels of involvement of CSOs in the North Atlantic or Liberal Model, the Democratic Corporatist Model, the Polarized Pluralist Model, and the Hybrid Media Systems of new democracies. Their research showed that CSOs have an important role in every country, and are becoming relevant actors even in those countries where we are striving to find the basic level of inclusion and dialogue to promote diversity. It is interesting to see how media literacy and civil society have become important actors in all media systems analyzed in this article. While most of the best practice examples still come from the Liberal Model countries we are witnessing new approaches and perspectives from the South East European region.

But even beyond the role that civil society can have in MIL it was recognized within public sphere theory. Lunt & Livingstone (2012) emphasized the need that civil society institutions have to support the public sphere and quoted Alexander and Jacobs (1998, p. 1), who argued that "civil society works not only through its relations with, or autonomy from, the state and economy, but also 'as a communicative space for the imaginative construction and reconstruction of more diffuse, but equally important, collective identities and solidarities" (in Lunt and Livingstone, 2012, p. 7). In this article we will give an overview of the actions and activities where CSOs have indeed become a communicative space and by virtue of that space, actors and activities have raised the awareness of collective identities from the media and digital literacy perspective.

The role, presence and activities of civil society are articulated in policy documents but also in the international declarations such as the UNESCO Riga Recommendations on Media and

Information Literacy in a Shifting Media and Information Landscape as well as in UNESCO Paris Declaration on Media and Information Literacy in the Digital Era:

> Civil society associations and NGOs act as a bridge between other stakeholders and ensure dialogue between MIL communities, inside and outside schools. They foster MIL activities and training in informal and non-formal settings. They reach out to adults and disadvantaged groups and provide lifelong support. They tend to support MIL focus on citizenship and civic agency and can foster a vibrant public sphere engagement and empowerment outcomes in the digital context. Civil society professionals also need to enhance their role and develop their capacities in the new digital environment that makes their grassroots networks more efficient and their collective intelligence more distributed.

Our information society poses so many challenges that it has become rather obvious that media education is needed at all educational level and for every member of our changing public sphere. We would also like to underline that "new media also afford the possibility of informal and peer learning of literacies through joint, creative activities of participation and community engagement that are fundamental prerequisites for citizenship" (Lunt et al, 2014, p. 148) The civic intentions of media education are as central and foundational to the field as is critical thinking (De Abreu et al., 2017, p. 8). In this study we will evaluate the existing media education models implemented by CSOs at the European level.

In the last three years two significant media literacy and media and information literacy research projects have been finished at the European level. We have done a detailed content analysis of two comprehensive research projects: ANR TRANSLIT and Mapping of ML practices and actions in EU 28. Our research question was: 'To what extent are CSOs present as stakeholders in media literacy, media and information literacy programs at the European level'.

2. Overview of the existing research on the role of CSOs

2.1. The TRANSLIT research project

TRANSLIT[1] research project brought together 69 experts from 28 countries, who worked together for 18 months. It was funded by the French National Research Agency (ANR). "The major objective of the reporting and mapping project is to improve understanding of MIL policies and initiatives in the EU countries, linking research to policy and practice" (Frau-Meigs et al., 2017, p. 4). This report researched the role of CSOs among others within 'Dimension No. 4'. The role of CSOs was evaluated by adjustment of Hallin and Mancini's Comparative Media Systems Model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) and later through the new Hybrid Model. Matović et al. (2017) questioned and evaluated the position of CSOs within all models and suggested different levels from low to high, while for most of the analyzed countries they acertained that an important role is played by the CSOs.

The private and civic sectors are among the major actors in MIL funding, but trends predict a highly significant involvement of the private sector in the future (…) The public sector remains moderately significant as a financial provider, while 'other actors' are very highly significant (>80% for private and civil society organisations). In fact, civil society organizations in Europe often benefit from private/public funding (foundations, grants, etc) (Frau-Meigs et al. 2017. p. 52).

In this article civil society was identified as an actor with 'significant impact'. Among eight other dimensions, actors and activities, civil society was ranked second. The TRANSLIT research also offered many arguments for the more important role of the civic sector beyond the private one showing that it is not declining but remains stable or progressing (p.65., fig. 1.31).

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[1] http://www.translit.fr/

A detailed analysis showed that CSOs in most of the countries played an important role, although sometimes not recognized by other actors and stake-holders, as reported by experts. At the European level we can see many differences that are challenging the existing model and asking for adjustments on a daily basis. This has become present even in some countries with a long tradition in civil society activities and programs. But new approaches and perspectives are coming forth in former communist countries of the European South-eastern area and are becoming recognized for a great number of new initiatives which are mainly voluntary and their intrinsic character.

2.2. Mapping of ML practices and actions in EU-28

In 2016, the European Audiovisual Observatory published a report, Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28. The report was prepared by the Observatory for the European Commission in order to identify 'the most significant ML projects of national and regional coverage carried out since January 2010'. The contributing author was Martina Chapman, Mercury Insights. National experts were responsible for the country reports and responses were collected between May and September 2016. Each country expert was also supposed to identify five most significant ML projects in their countries.

> Of the 939 identified main media literacy stakeholders, over a third were categorized as 'civil society' (305), followed by 'public authorities' (175) and 'academia' (161). Over two-thirds of them do not have a statutory responsibility in this area and base their involvement on a different motivation 189 networks were identified and the vast majority of them (135) are operating at national level. (European Audiovisual Observatory - EAO, 2016, pp. 3-4)

In this first mapping of ML practices civil society has become the main ML stakeholder. It has been defined as "foundations, not-for-profit organisations arts and cultural bodies, charities, think-tanks, communities of interest and community networks (sports, health, hobbies and religion)" (EAO, 2016, p. 36).

Civil society is definitely recognizable in the ML framework within the EU. 'All countries recorded main stakeholders coming from this sector and only five countries recorded three or fewer. The mean number of main ML stakeholders coming from 'Civil Society' is eight and the highest recorded number comes from Spain with 42.' (EAO, 2016, p. 37)

Each project type listed was selected from one of the seven categories: resources, end-user engagement, research, networking platforms, provision of funding, campaigns, policy development. "Respondents were also given five main categories of ML skills and asked to identify which skills were addressed by the 20 most significant ML projects in their country since 2010: creativity, critical thinking, intercultural dialogue, media use, participation and interaction" (EAO, 2016, p. 41).

Even in the list of 145 case study projects in EU-28 civil society was also the most important sector with 96 recognized projects. The projects were evaluated through the dimension of cross-collaboration. "'Civil Society' is the sector that demonstrates the highest frequency of involvement with the 'case-study' projects and is involved in 83 of 109 cross-sector collaborations. This is followed by 'Public Authorities' who are involved in 78 cross-sector collaborations' (EAO, 2016, p. 49). If we take into account individual sector activities we can again see that civil society provides the greatest number of individual case study projects. When we compare these results to, for instance, the activities of journalists' associations in promoting media literacy to those of civil society we see that journalists' associations with even greater tradition and organizational structure, and with an incomparably greater number of members and influence, have underachieved in ML activities and programs throughout Europe. Namely, in just 15 out of 939 cases journalists' associations were identified as stakeholders in ML.

This mapping project is significant for one more reason: it shows that just 15/145 projects refer to the European level, and by far the greatest number of projects is focused on a national

level. This could be seen as one of many lost opportunities, and a more complex challenge where grassroots civil society initiatives do not have the capacity for raising the awareness on the international level. Without joint cooperation with public/state/regulator authorities, and without a broader strategic plan this will not be possible. We will tackle this issue in the discussion.

The report also researched the statutory responsibility of the actors around ML and one of the findings was that the majority of them do not have that kind of responsibility. Statuary responsibility is not a guarantee that a specific institution will provide an adequate action based upon the defined responsibility. CSOs are not in a situation to be obliged to promote ML. In most of the cases this is the matter of their policy, motivation and social responsibility.

3. Media literacy (ML), media and information literacy (MIL) and transliteracy

At the international level, in last 30 years we have witnessed the development of three different but also to a certain extent overlapping models: ML, MIL, and transliteracy. In each one of these models civil society has a vital role. One of the first comprehensive ML definition was introduced by Patricia Aufderheide in 1992 at the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy.

> A media literate person - everyone should have the opportunity to become one - can decode, evaluate, analyze and produce both print and electronic media. The fundamental objective of media literacy is critical autonomy in relationship to all media. Emphases in media literacy training range widely, including informed citizenship, aesthetic appreciation and expression, social advocacy, self-esteem, and consumer competence (Aufderheide, 1992, p. 1)

Since 1992 researchers have tried to improve the definition by emphasizing some aspects. But all of them have stayed within the framework of access, analysis, evaluation and production. Nevertheless, even this definition from 1992 has recognized the importance of decoding, that has remained one of the cornerstones of MIL and transliteracy. Some other definitions focused more on institutions and the importance of engaging such as the one by Hoechsmann and Poyntz: "Media literacy is a set of competencies that enable us to interpret media texts and institutions, to make media of our own, and to recognize and engage with the social and political influence of media in everyday life"(Hoechsmann and Ponytz, 2012, p. 1). ML has been called also as the "locus of several competing frameworks with recurring key notions whose weight vary according to national configurations". (Frau-Meigs, 2017, p.114)

The definition of ML has been challenged not just by academics and experts but also by international institutions. Media literacy was articulated and defined by the European Commission:

> Media literacy refers to all the technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that allow us to access and have a critical understanding of and interact with media. These capacities allow us to exercise critical thinking, while participating in the economic, social and cultural aspects of society and playing an active role in the democratic process[2].

A step forward was made by Renee Hobbs (2011) while presenting five essential dimensions of digital and ML that include: access, analyze, create, reflect and act. We also use the term transliteracy, in line with the name of one of the most influential TRANSLIT project. Introduced within the Transcriptions Research Project in 2005 by Alan Liu, the new concept of transliteracy was defined by Frau-Meigs (2012) as:

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[2] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/media-literacy

1. the ability to embrace the full layout of multimedia which encompasses skills for reading, writing, and calculating with all the available tools (from paper to image, from book to wiki) and

2. The capacity to navigate through multiple domains, which entails the ability to search, evaluate, test, validate and modify information according to its relevant contexts of use (as code, news and document (Frau-Meigs, 2012, p. 16)

In 2007, UNESCO introduced a new model of MIL. It is defined as a "combination of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices required to access, analyze, evaluate, use, produce, and communicate information and knowledge in creative, legal, and ethical ways that respect human rights." (Moscow Declaration on Media and Information Literacy, 2012). Although strongly supported by UNESCO this concept is still not embraced in most of the countries. There are a significant number of information literacy scientists that are sceptical about bringing together media and information literacy to MIL.

In this research paper we will give a detailed analysis of the projects that researched the role of civil society by means of two different models, one based on ML alone, the other on MIL.

4. Overview of the stake-holders

In the first part of our study we will analyse the presence of CSO's as stake holders in the EU and in the second part we will describe the most significant country report on the role of CSOs in promoting ML.

Table 1
Overview of civil society as stakeholders in EU-28. Source: *Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28*

Country	Total number of stakeholders	Civil Society as the stakeholder	Ranking of civil society as a stakeholder within member state
Austria (AT)	15	5	1
Belgium (BE)	58	20	1
Bulgaria (BG)	24	18	1
Cyprus (CY)	8	4	1
Czech Republic (CZ)	16	2	3
Germany (DE)	19	7	1
Denmark (DK)	34	13	1
Estonia (EE)	14	8	1
Spain (ES)	76	42	1
Finland (FI)	101	34	1
France (FR)	55	22	1
Greece (GR)	25	4	1
Croatia (HR)	33	14	1
Hungary (HU)	29	9	1
Ireland (IE)	33	3	4
Italy (IT)	25	5	3
Lithuania (LT)	83	11	1
Luxembourg (LU)	11	3	1
Latvia (LV)	48	9	3
Malta (MT)	8	1	5
Netherlands (NL)	23	9	1
Poland (PL)	63	19	1
Portugal (PT)	57	14	2
Romania (RO)	11	7	1
Sweden (SE)	14	4	2

Slovenia (SI)	20	3	4
Slovakia (SK)	18	5	2
United Kingdom (UK)	18	10	1

The table shows that in 19 out of the 28 evaluated EU countries the biggest stakeholder is civil society. This is one of the key findings of the report.

The table is interesting for a few more reasons. We recognize the historical differences and similarities of the neighbouring countries. We find it interesting to see the role of CSOs in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia, countries that were in Czechoslovakia before 1989. CSOs that work in the field of ML have not flourished in these countries in comparison to all other former communist countries where CSOs are not the most important stake-holders in ML.

Another comparison takes us to the examples of Bulgaria and Romania. In Bulgaria we can see significantly more CSOs activities in ML. There are differences in the level of CSOs activity in the former Soviet republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Amongst these three countries Lithuania is recognized for the greatest number of ML stakeholders and CSOs in ML.

Finally, if we compare Slovenia and Croatia, also former communist countries with joint history we see that Croatia has longer tradition in ML with a bigger number of stakeholders. Slovenia, together with Malta and Ireland does not have any tradition of CSOs acting as a relevant stake-holders in ML.

The historical dimension seems to be one of the key variables in the overall ML framework. In this study we were not able to analyse other variables such as: the size of the countries, geographical aspects, the language barrier and funding. But we were able to identify that CSOs are active in a specific national context and society with many peculiarities. They differentiate in the very origin of their activities, in the number of people they engage and without detailed information on all these aspects we miss some of the important perspectives in order to define and interpret precisely the role that CSOs have in promoting ML and MIL. And yet, we find the new trends rather interesting.

Table 2
Overview of the number of CSO stakeholders per country. Source: *Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28*

Number of CSO stakeholders	Countries
0-9	AT, CY, CZ, DE, EE, GR, HU, IE, IT, LU, LV, MT, NL, RO, SE, SI, SK
10-19	BG, DK, HR, LT, PL PT, UK
20-30	BE, FR
31-40	FI
41+	ES

Although the two mentioned studies are not comparable (one researching the role of CSOs in ML and the other one in MIL, while the TRANSLIT project has included countries outside the EU) they provide an interesting insight in the role of CSOs within the MIL and ML models. While the TRANSLIT research project (Matović et al., 2017) found solid arguments that MIL level is in an initial stage in the hybrid model countries (CZ, SK, EE, LV, LT, BG, RO, HU, PL, HR, SRB, B&H) the findings from ML mapping show that CSOs ML activities in these countries are on a higher level than in MIL. The examples of France and Spain are even more interesting. These two countries are included in the Polarized Pluralist Model (Hallin & Mancini, 2011) with 'most active CSOs' but with 'medium' MIL level. If we were to evaluate the position of CSOs in France and Spain we would have to identify them in the 'High level of ML'. Not just because of the quantitative indicators but primarily for the huge tradition and the role they had in these countries, serving as a role models for inclusion and cross sectoral collaboration.

At the European level there are countries with outstanding examples of ML initiated and provided by CSOs. These countries are Belgium, France, Finland and Spain. They all have more than 20 CSOs stakeholders with Spain accounting 42 of all the 76 identified. We will give a brief overview of the three countries with the greatest number of CSO stake-holders.

France is indeed a country with huge history in ML. There are many projects that come from cross-sector collaboration. Five most significant projects are:

'Le semaine de la presse et des medias à l'école (SPME)' – The Press and Media Week at School (ML activity conducted for the last 27 years by the CLEMI; 2025 Ex machina – an educational game launched in 2010 targeting teenagers (12-17 years old) and their use of social networks; Educnum – encouraging people to think about how they are potentially observed for commercial or political purposes; Les Clés des medias (Keys for understanding media) – designed to facilitate debate and learning about media issues in the school environment or among a larger audience; European Educational Film Festival – important aspect of promoting social inclusion and preventing violence and radicalization. (EAO, 2016, pp. 191-192)

Finland, just like France, has a long history in ML, but in several last years new approaches have been introduced such as:

Fatabaari/Fact Bar – a web based fact-checking service bringing accuracy to the public debate; Peliviikko/Finish Game Week – an annual themed week in November focused on promoting game literacy and positive gaming gaming culture; Media-avain/Media Key – a tool for rating positive and age-appropriate contents in media, especially in films; Mediakasvatus.fi – an online ecosystem and a platform that aims to promote and develop media education and ML in Finland acting as the main information outlet for media education professionals; Yle Uutisluokka/Yle News Class – with objectives to develop students' ML skills, bring voices of the young to a wider audience and help them understand the world. (EAO, 2016, p. 177-180)

Spain is strongly promoting networks, but civil society plays a very important role as well.

Observatorio para la Innovación de los Informativos en la Sociedad Digital – Oi2 – with the purpose to observe the narrative information in the digital society and analyse the possible social, business, industrial and economic implication of any changes, and identify potential opportunities for new innovative business models in the sector; EMEDUS – an extensive review and a deep bibliographical analysis of the three major lines related ML across Europe; Chaval – the project with the aim to alert parents, educators and children about the risks of new technologies; TVE Defence of the Viewer – launched to address all the comments and questions of viewers of public service television; Digital Citizenship – iCmedia – training sessions, taught by experts on digital content and tools for the new digital citizenship offered to parents, teachers and children…(EAO, 2016, p. 164-168)

5. Discussion

In this article we were able only to identify the best practice models in three countries with the most significant number of CSO actors. But the importance of CSOs in countries without long history in ML is yet to be addressed.

We have provided a number of arguments in order to explain the role and importance of CSOs. As expected, the analysis showed that a great deal of the activities is organized and implemented for teenage/older students and professionals while the elderly remain marginalized. There is an evident risk and a prominent trend that most of the new activities do not include older people as the ones that are also asking for their voice to be heard in the 'communicative space'. Among the 547 listed projects,173 are based on 'resources' and 107 deal with 'end-user engagement', followed by 'research' (78), 'campaigns' (77), and 'networking platforms' (66). (EAO,

2016, p. 40) These channels of communication were used to provide programs on: critical thinking (403), media use (385), participation and interaction (323), creativity (264), intercultural dialogue (162) and other (58) (ibid, 42). We can see that most of the criteria we use to explain the role of CSOs have been met and CSOs are providing services, channels and communicative spaces and empowering the general public on a national level and usually in a national context.

For the first time in Europe we can analyze the role of CSOs in a cross-country comparison in ML and MIL fields. The research that has been done within in the TRANSLIT project and through Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28, makes it possible for us to understand and evaluate the role of CSOs in our European context.

Civil society has been providing bottom up activities that flourished over the last 10 years and become the most significant actor in this field. While we recognize the need for more detailed qualitative research in this field, the question that has to be answered is what happened with other stakeholders in MIL on the European level. What would our MIL look like if there were no civil society organizations? The role that CSOs have is perceived as crucial. 'Most media literacy or education training is provided as part of informal networks or a feature of non-governmentally funded projects' (McDougall et al., 2017, p. 132). It took us years to become aware of this potential hidden within civil society. Up to several years ago the efforts of CSOs were not recognized in our policies. At present they are in the position to continue their work often without the official support from national or international institutions. Even in the scientific community we did not recognize the potential and importance of CSOs. But at the international level decisions are still made within policy groups and actions where CSOs representatives are not present or do not have the regular possibility to participate.

6. Conclusion

This paper calls for the necessity to indicate possible risks in CSOs activities and policies. CSOs are often based on the work of several individuals and despite obvious intrinsic motivation their activities lack the impact dimension, mostly due to some organizational constrains. This is becoming even a bigger obstacle due to the fact that most activities are organized and implemented in a local language. A few years ago, due to the language barrier it was hard to learn even some basic information on the most significant projects in a specific country and/or region. Consequently, this richness of the activities is not recognized mostly because of the language barrier.

Furthermore, both researches are missing a regional comparative perspective. For the future research it would be interesting to analyze the role of CSOs in the European regions and not just in the EU within just one frame. We need to know the financial background of the CSOs and to compare this information with the nature of their projects.

Both analyzed research reports brought together almost 100 experts from different fields and research backgrounds but they all did indicate that CSOs are the most prominent promoter of ML. CSOs should also work on their cooperation and exchange of good practices. Taking the case of Croatia in point (Ciboci, Kanižaj, Labaš, 2015) we witnessed the effective role of a CSO acting as a mediator between different stakeholders. The leading Croatian CSO - DKMK and the project Djeca medija, that was awarded with EVENS FOUNDATION Special media education Jury Prize, provides a new approach in promoting media education that is based on several levels and stages: uniting and active volunteering, analysis and critical evaluation of the media, creating new media, action, raising awareness in the scientific community, cooperation with organizations as a prerequisite for conducting research and pressure from bellow, as already explained in Ciboci et al (2015).

From the European perspective we have found several possibilities for CSOs to emphasize their role and coordinate their activities with the goal of being recognized as the key stakeholder in MIL promotion on a wider scale.

1. **Universal approach** – CSOs in EU are acting in an effective way in national contexts. They are also building new services that are applicable with minor adjustments to the EU level.

2. **Not dependent on the state/authority** – organisations in most of the countries were faced with projects that were financed or co-financed by the state/authorities or EU institutions. However, they also have the experience of insufficient funding, especially from the local or national level and due to these circumstances, they have built new models of fundraising and financing if their first and primary orientation is not voluntary.

3. **CSOs are responsive to contemporary ML and MIL challenges**. Just like the private sector CSOs are flexible and with sufficient human resources are able to adjust their activities and/or produce new models for new challenges in a short period. An interesting example is EAVI from Belgium and their reaction and reflection on Fake News challenge.

4. **More efficient than other institutions due to their size and organisational structure**. They provide a grassroots platform for new ideas and approaches able to respond. End-user engagement is their expertise and strength.

5. **Inclusiveness** – CSOs are capable to bring different stakeholders together and serve as a mediator. Cross sectoral cooperation has proven to be their advantage in comparison to other stake holders.

6. **Dependent on sustainable intrinsic values** – CSOs often include voluntary programs, activities and stimulate participatory models for a broader public. The common argument that their work is not sustainable because it is primarily voluntary is losing its strength because CSOs that nourish intrinsic values are the only ones that are able to survive the lack and/or decline in financing: intrinsic values of the members will possibly provide the fundamental precondition for their CSO to become active.

In the EU and beyond we have great diversity in the CSOs activities and outcomes. But these organizations cannot guarantee the existence for ML, nor for MIL on their own. We know for sure that cooperation in communicative spaces is needed more than ever. We know for sure that media regulators cannot tackle and solve all MIL challenges but they can raise the awareness and initiate research and cooperation in our societies. We will never know what politicians could have done if they had been the ones that recognized the need for new alliances and platforms between different stakeholders. We hope to see private companies embracing social responsibility and support programs for critical thinking. We wait for the member states to promote their best practices in the field. We all are expected to focus more on the needs of older people in our societies. 'The challenge of the 21st century is putting communicators, teachers, politicians, scientists, authorities, the technology industry, the media and civil society together while understanding the global challenges of ML as part of a global education' (Perez Tornero, Varis, 2010, p. 126). Nowdays, bringing them together is not sufficient anymore. Nevertheless, we all should acknowledge the persistent stake-holders that obviously care the most.

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Declarations and recommendations

UNESCO Moscow Declaration on Media and Information Literacy, http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/In_Focus/Moscow_Declaration_on_MIL_eng.pdf

UNESCO Paris Declaration on Media and Information Literacy in Digital Era, http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/In_Focus/paris_mil_declaration_final.pdf

UNESCO Riga Recommendations on Media and Information Literacy in a Shifting Media and Information Landscape, http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/Events/riga_recommendations_on_media_and_information_literacy.pdf