



Think Critically, Click Wisely: Media and Information Literate Citizens!

International Launch of the Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Educators and Learners

Concept Note

Focus and Background

Ensuring citizens have the skills needed to think critically about media and information in the digital age is no doubt one of the defining challenges of our time.

Recent decades have been marked by rapid technical transformations that have completely upended the ways people interact, communicate and access information about the world. Online citizens now possess the entirety of human knowledge in the palms of their hands, and news and information can ricochet around the world in seconds. There are vast new opportunities to educate, inform and organize.

Yet these dramatic shifts have led to drastic consequences that we are only beginning to understand, including misinformation, disinformation, hate speech and an often toxic environment hostile to constructive discussion. The very notions of objective truth and healthy debate – the foundations of scientific progress and democratic discourse – are becoming increasingly out of reach.

This has been brought into sharp focus by the COVID-19 pandemic, during which access to reliable information can be a question of life and death. Misinformation and rumours about the novel coronavirus, responses to tackle the pandemic and now the vaccine itself have spread like wildfire, especially through social media networks.

Media and information literate citizens are equipped to navigate these challenges and participate more meaningfully in their societies. They are able to differentiate between reliable information and misinformation, know how and where to locate trustworthy sources of facts and informed opinion, and why it is crucial not to circulate unverified content. Women and men of all ages can exercise their full agency in the information ecology, whether they have access to digital technology or not.

Ensuring everyone has the skills needed to “think critically and click wisely” is a critical part of a systemic policy response to misinformation and hate speech, while preserving fundamental freedoms including freedom of expression. It necessitates targeted public policies to this end at the national and institutional levels, through formal education systems and informal and non-formal learning spaces alike.

A new curriculum for critical thinking

This international event, which will take place in the Republic of Serbia, aims to launch a landmark new framework for education in these crucial skills – “*Think critically, Click*

Wisely: Media and Information Literate Citizens” (Second Edition of the UNESCO Model Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Educators and Learners)”.

UNESCO first published its Model MIL Curriculum in 2011, a groundbreaking publication at the time. Still today, it remains the only international curriculum that harmonizes competencies to deal with content provided by knowledge and information institutions (such as libraries and archives), media institutions, and digital platforms. The first edition continues to be in high demand, exists in 12 languages, and has informed the development of further and complementary resources by various partners across the world. Notwithstanding, as ten years have passed since its publication, UNESCO identified a clear need to update this flagship resource, notably in the light of the massive shifts in the communications environment – including challenges put into sharp focus by the pandemic.

The process of updating UNESCO’s model MIL Curriculum began in the Republic of Serbia, who hosted the first International Consultative Meeting on MIL Curriculum on 12-13 September 2019 in the presence of the Director-General of UNESCO, the First Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia. This international consultation was followed by a year-long series of international and regional consultation meetings.

This pioneering second edition of the UNESCO model resource, “Think Critically, Click Wisely! Media and Information Literate Citizens” (MIL Curriculum for Educators and Learners) draws attention to how MIL can contribute to people’s critical engagement with information to advance the sustainable development goals. The launch of the publication will kick-start a rejuvenation and strengthening of MIL training in formal, informal, and non-formal learning online and offline, in all form of learning spaces. The event will be held in the presence of high-level officials.

This new edition responds to developments in the social and digital domains, including artificial intelligence, privacy issues, the increasing importance of social competencies such as digital citizenship, education for sustainable development, cultural literacy and intercultural competencies, science literacy and the exponential rise in disinformation and online hate speech.

It will serve as a definitive resource for placing these issues at the heart of the global education agenda over the coming years.

Venue & Dates

The international event will be hosted in Belgrade, Republic of Serbia, on **23, 27 and 29 April 2021**.

Key Objective

To launch the second edition of the UNESCO Model Media and Information Literacy Curriculum, drawing global attention to the urgency of MIL for everyone and by everyone.

Modality and Sessions

The event will take a hybrid format including:

- A. Two high-level television-style discussions (23 April 2021):**

1. The first will include high-level representatives of the Republic of Serbia, UNESCO, the European Commission, and WHO (*tbc*). It will take place via remote participation and coordinate from a television studio in Belgrade.

Time: 15:00-15:30 PM

Proposed Participants:

Moderator (Serbian Television Host, TBC)

- ❖ **Ms Audrey Azoulay**, Director-General of UNESCO
- ❖ **Ms Ana Brnabić**, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia
- ❖ **Ms Vera Jourova**, Vice President and Commissioner of the European Commission
- ❖ **Ms Monique Nsanzabaganwa**, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission (TBC)
- ❖ **Mr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**, Director-General of the World Health Organization (TBC)

Focus: This first session will focus on 1) the importance of MIL to the international development agenda, 2) the need for national policies and international cooperation especially in the context of sustainable ways to tackle disinformation and promote information for the public good, and 3) launch of the resource “Media and Information Literate Citizens: Think critically, Click Wisely! (Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Educators and Learners)”.

2. The second high-level discussion will consist of representatives who focus on implementation. It includes UNESCO and the Republic of Serbia. It will take place via remote participation and be coordinated from a television studio in Belgrade.

Time: 15:45-16:15 PM

Proposed Participants:

Moderator (Serbian Television Host, TBC)

- ❖ **Ms Stefania Giannini** Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO
- ❖ **Ms Gordana Comic**, Minister for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, Republic of Serbia
- ❖ **Mr Douglas Slater**, Assistant Secretary General in Charge of Human and Social Development at the CARICOM Secretariat (TBC)
- ❖ **Ms Smriti Zubin Irani**, Minister of Women Affairs and Child Development, India (TBC)

Focus: This second session will focus on 1) role-out and use of the MIL Curriculum in formal, non-formal, and informal learning outside and inside the classroom, and 2) the role of education systems, NGOs,

media, libraries, digital communication companies and other information providers.

The sessions will have interpretation in English, French, and Serbian.

3. Remote participation from stakeholders from all over the globe, including UNESCO Member States that will be invited. **Both events are to be streamed on UNESCO's Facebook and YouTube channels, as well as on relevant channels of other involved partners.**
- B.** Four international webinars presenting various case studies from MIL experts and practitioners as well other experts. **(27 and 29 April fully online via Zoom).**
1. These 4 webinars will include speakers from countries where the UNESCO Model MIL Curriculum has been adapted to national contexts, MIL experts and practitioners, as well as those in other related competency areas such as global citizenship education, education for sustainable development, cultural literacy and intercultural competencies, science literacy etc. The webinars will highlight various integrated topics covered in this new resource, "Media and Information Literate Citizens: Think critically, Click Wisely! (MIL Curriculum for Educators and Learners)".

Time: 15:00-17:00 PM on each day (Two successive sessions per day)

Proposed Participants:

Moderators and speakers

- ❖ Will be available on the events webpage

- C.** Online communication campaign and peer education about MIL on social media, coordinated with DPI and other Sectors, as well as with external partners.

The event will benefit from intersectoral cooperation with all UNESCO Programme Sectors. Each sector will undertake different actions to promote the MIL Curriculum and its use. They will also invite their respective constituency to participate in the international event.

Partners

This international launch event will be co-organized by UNESCO (Communication and Information Sector) and the Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Serbia.

The key partners will include countries that have already implemented the Curriculum, the UNESCO-UNAOC MIL and Intercultural Dialogue UNITWIN Network, the UNESCO MIL Alliance, the UNESCO Information for All Programme (IFAP), the UNESCO Cities Platform, UNESCO Associated Schools (ASPnet) network, UNESCO Youth Networks, and Twitter.

Other UN Agencies, the European Commission, and the Council of Europe will be invited, as well as representatives of countries to Serbia and national institutions.

Outcome

The key outcome of the conference will be increased awareness of the urgency of MIL and of the availability of the second edition of the MIL Curriculum.

Follow-up

- As a follow-up to the launch, UNESCO and partners will revamp an OER-driven Online Multimedia MIL Teaching Resources Tool platform, (<http://unesco.mil-for-teachers.unaoc.org>) as a UN platform for collaboration around MIL and as a global community of practice – including educators, learners and other stakeholders – who will be able to freely copy, adapt, and share their resources, including the MIL Curriculum.

The Platform will encourage collaboration and partnership opportunities between similar institutions, and more strongly link the users and institutions to UNESCO, cooperation across the UN for wide-scale use and ongoing real-life and real-time enhancements of the MIL Curriculum.

- A series of micro-learning resources will be developed based on the content of the MIL Curriculum and distributed online to promote peer education on MIL.
- The **Belgrade Recommendations on Global Standards for MIL Curriculum for Teachers**, which was the outcome of the international expert group meeting in Belgrade in September 2019, will be prepared to be launched during the Global MIL Week 2021 celebrations.
- Ongoing actions to translate the new MIL Curriculum in as many languages as possible and support for its adaption at national and institutional levels.