International Media and Information Literacy Institute Feasibility Study Report

This report is written by

*José Manuel Pérez Tornero, UAB

Alton Grizzle, UNESCO

Carolyn Wilson, Western University of Canada

Paulette Stewart, The University of the West Indies.

INTERNATIONAL MIL INSTITUTE FEASIBILITY STUDY REPORT

Content

Executive Summary

The creation of the International Media and Information Literacy Institute with the support of UNESCO, NORDICOM and other partners is a need expressed by international experts and industry companies to face the current challenges in our society. This report describes this need and defines the bases of the Institute.

The report is divided into two main sections.. The first one presents the findings obtained through the survey addressed to international experts, industry companies and institutions focusing on their possible contribution to the creation of the International MIL institute and its services. This section also demonstrates the results of the benchmarking developed to identify .

The second section presents a proposal of the definition and structure of the International MIL Institute. This proposal is developed after considering the findings obtained from experts and industry companies, in addition to the lessons learnt from other similar institutions. .

Summary of findings

1. The proposed International *Media and Information Literacy (MIL)* Institute would be the first of its kind. Currently, there are not any institutes with characteristics similar to those proposed for this one..

2. There is a consensus among experts, industry companies and other stakeholders about the real need of this Institute.

3. Experts, industry companies and institutions expressed their interest in collaborating in the activities proposed (research, training, advocacy, capacity building, policy development).

4. Industry companies are highly interested in research and training activities. Regarding the training activities, they highlighted joint degrees between universities, PhD programs, MOOC course with a

certificate, workshops among others. Experts agree with the industry companies on this.

5. Experts agree on the need to create more political relevance to MIL as a matter of public policy, and hence help current practitioners to gain attention and legitimise their work.

6. Stakeholders and industry companies offered diverse types of potential cooperation with the Institute; sponsorship, financial support, research collaboration, dissemination of the activities in the media, participation in educational activities and workshops, advocacy, lobbying, capacity building and policy development.

7. Experts proposed that the International MIL Institute acts as a knowledge hub, a repository and a place to get information on projects and aid to develop MIL initiatives in different regions. They added that the Institute could help strengthen joint research and international comparison/assessment schemes to create "key performance indicators (KPI) to measure the progress".

8. The experts propose five central units defining the principal functions of the International MIL Institute:

- Education Unit,

- Research Unit,
- Information and Communication Unit,
- Policy and Advocacy Unit and
- Management and Funding Unit.

9. Regarding the governance, it is proposed that the International MIL Institute be directly linked to UNESCO, the MILID Network and GAPMIL.

10. The structure of the MIL Institute must correspond to an active network of a limited number of research centers and Universities.

The following graphs summarize the functions, structure and units as well as the context of International MIL Institute.

Figure: 1. International MIL institute

Figure 2: Context

REPORT
INTRODUCTION

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) as a discipline has been strongly supported by international institutions and universities worldwide. Such support is demonstrated through collaborations to foster media competences among citizens.

MIL aims to promote capacities related to critical thinking, media knowledge (agenda setting, media structures, opinion leaders, among other topics related to news production, online and offline content in general), information management skills, digital skills, social media uses among other relevant competencies.

The need for MIL emerges now more than ever with the current challenges we face as a society. Such challenges include improving democracy, promoting welfare, overcoming fake news, protecting childhood and ensuring a healthy communication ecosystem.

The creation of an MIL institute could contribute to promoting international research to solve global challenges, as well as educational activities addressed to higher education, professional training and consultancy.
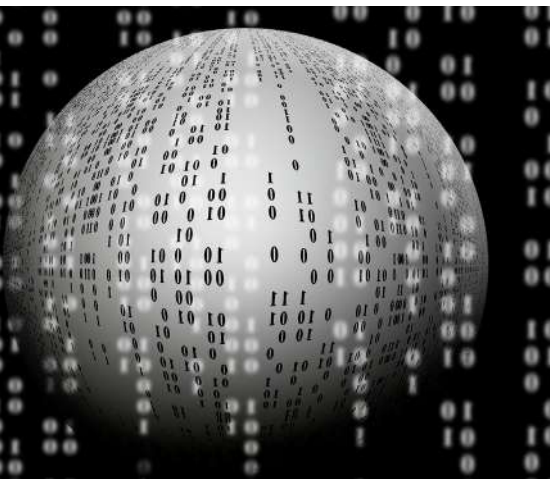
MIL is a means to empower people and counterbalance hegemonic speeches, centralized content and information, and media/political power in general. For this reason UNESCO emphasizes that:

> *"Empowerment of people through Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is an important prerequisite for fostering equitable access to information and knowledge and promoting free, independent and pluralistic media and information systems. Media and Information Literacy recognizes the primary role of information and media in our everyday lives. It lies at the core of freedom of expression and information - since it empowers citizens to understand the functions of media and other information providers, to critically evaluate their content, and to make informed decisions as users and producer of information and media content".*[1]

From a similar perspective, the European Commission describes Media Literacy as "the ability of people to access, understand, create and critically evaluate different types of media". The EC believes that "MIL is vital for economic growth and

---

1   UNESCO, Media and Information Literacy, http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/media-development/media-literacy/mil-as-composite-concept/browse/4/

job creation"[2] and that "digital technologies are a key driver of competitiveness and innovation in the media, information, and communication technology sectors".[3]

UNESCO also suggests that "MIL includes a set of competencies to search, critically evaluate, use and contribute information and media content wisely; knowledge of one's rights online; understanding how to combat online hate speech and cyberbullying; understanding of the ethical issues surrounding the access and use of information; and engage with media and ICTs to promote equality, free expression, intercultural/interreligious dialogue, peace, etc.[4]"

In addition to the delineations stressed by these major institutions, MIL is understood and compared to other disciplines such as edu-communication, multiple literacies or media education, and integrates widely supported disciplines surrounding information literacy, film literacy and digital/ICT literacy. Therefore, MIL has been a subject of research and training around the world as well as an object of governmental and other institutional policies.

This report accumulates these efforts by giving an overview of the principal findings of the different surveys and instruments used to gather information about the viability/feasibility of setting up an International MIL Institute with support from UNESCO, NORDICOM and other partners.

The main objective is to inform UNESCO and NORDICOM and other partners about the possibilities such institute could open to the global MIL community as well as the society in general, providing recommendations regarding its implementation, functions and structure.

---

2 European Commission, Media Literacy, https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/audiovisual-policies/literacy_en

3 Ibid.

4 https://en.unesco.org/globalmilweek2018.

The report explores the main services the Institute could offer to help enhance MIL, the resources it should create, the funding mechanisms it must seek and the structure it should follow. It reflects on the role the different actors and stakeholders related to MIL should play to foster MIL development.

2.1 Objectives of the report

This report seeks to assess what media and information literacy experts, practitioners and industry partners think about the possibility to create an International MIL Institute that could deliver to the general MIL Community and stakeholders.

The specific objectives of the report are to:

Explore the possibilities the International MIL Institute would create in terms of capacity building.

Explore the possibilities the International MIL Institute would create in terms of access to MIL Resources.

Explore the possibilities the International MIL Institute would create in terms of research and policy advocacy.

The report explores the objectives UNESCO has set in terms of providing access to MIL education, both in formal and informal education. This type of education could include accredited programs, university degrees and other training certificates.

As for the second objective, the report inquiries about the ways in which the **International MIL Institute** should support the acquisition, curation, indexation and delivery of MIL resources.

It also studies actions to be undertaken to reinforce the UNESCO/UNAOC Network on MIL (MILID[5] and GAPMIL[6]) as well as the global MIL community. These efforts seek to generalize the current frameworks UNESCO has issued on MIL policy, assessment and curriculum as well as research.

The International MIL Institute will be the nucleus of the **Global MIL Observatory** and to the possibility of offering consolidated reportwith the possibility of offering consolidated reports on MIL developments and services, in addition to guidelines related to MIL policy and advocacy standards.

---

5   Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue University Network.

6   Global Alliance for Partnerships in Media and Information Literacy.

2.2 Methodology

This report frelies on a methodology that includes different instruments to collect information. The methodology - questionnaires and general instruments applied - were jointly decided on/designed by experts of the UNESCO-UNAOC MILID University network.

Different questionnaires were designed to consult experts on MIL

In the first stage, 94 MIL experts were surveyed. The questionnaire was a comprehensive set of questions that asked about the degree in which they agreed or disagreed with different statements. Questions were grouped to inquire about the Institute's relevance, functions, scope, structure, funding and services.

The second questionnaire, answered by more than 60 experts, had a set of open-ended questions that were used to validate the information gathered in the first questionnaire. Half of the experts who answered it had also responded to the first one.

Answers provided by the other half helped the team validate the information as they served as a control group too (to avoid possible biases by respondents who

could have been influenced by the first questionnaire).

In addition, **a survey was designed and addressed to different industry partners** and stakeholders to explore their input and potential contribution. A total of 35 responses from industry companies from different countries have been collected.

Benchmarking analysis was also conducted to explore similar institutes or organizations carrying out related work. The main criteria to choose the organization subject to study was their participation in recent MIL related conferences or events. They were mainly selected from the lists offered by the 2nd European Media and Information Literacy Forum (Riga, 2016), Media Meets Literacy (Warsaw, 2015), Media Literacy Experts Group EC (Brussels, 2016), Media and Learning (Brussels, 2016), LIMEAM Summer School (Lovain-la-Neuve, 2016), Media Educational Summit (Boston, 2016), Media Education Futures (Tampere, 2014). Other organizations were also chosen among other GAPMIL partners[7].

---

7   See the GAPMIL Framework and Plan of Action: http://www.
     unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/Events/
     gapmil_framework_and_plan_of_action.pdf

The study also took into consideration recent research on the mapping of media literacy policies in Europe (EMEDUS (2014) and ANR Translit (2014)).

Two types of organizations were studied within the benchmarking: a) organizations that have as their main aim the pursuit of the development of Media and Information Literacy, and b) organizations related to media, technology and children, which do not have the development of MIL as their main objective.

The idea of creating an **International MIL Institute** has long been discussed and supported. There have been several attempts to develop MIL networks and international observatories. Networks such as the current UNESCO-UNAOC MILID and the GAPMIL have been proven efficient and have contributed to boost MIL as a discipline. Researchers, organizations with MIL-related activities and public policies are focusing more on this area due to the current challenges.
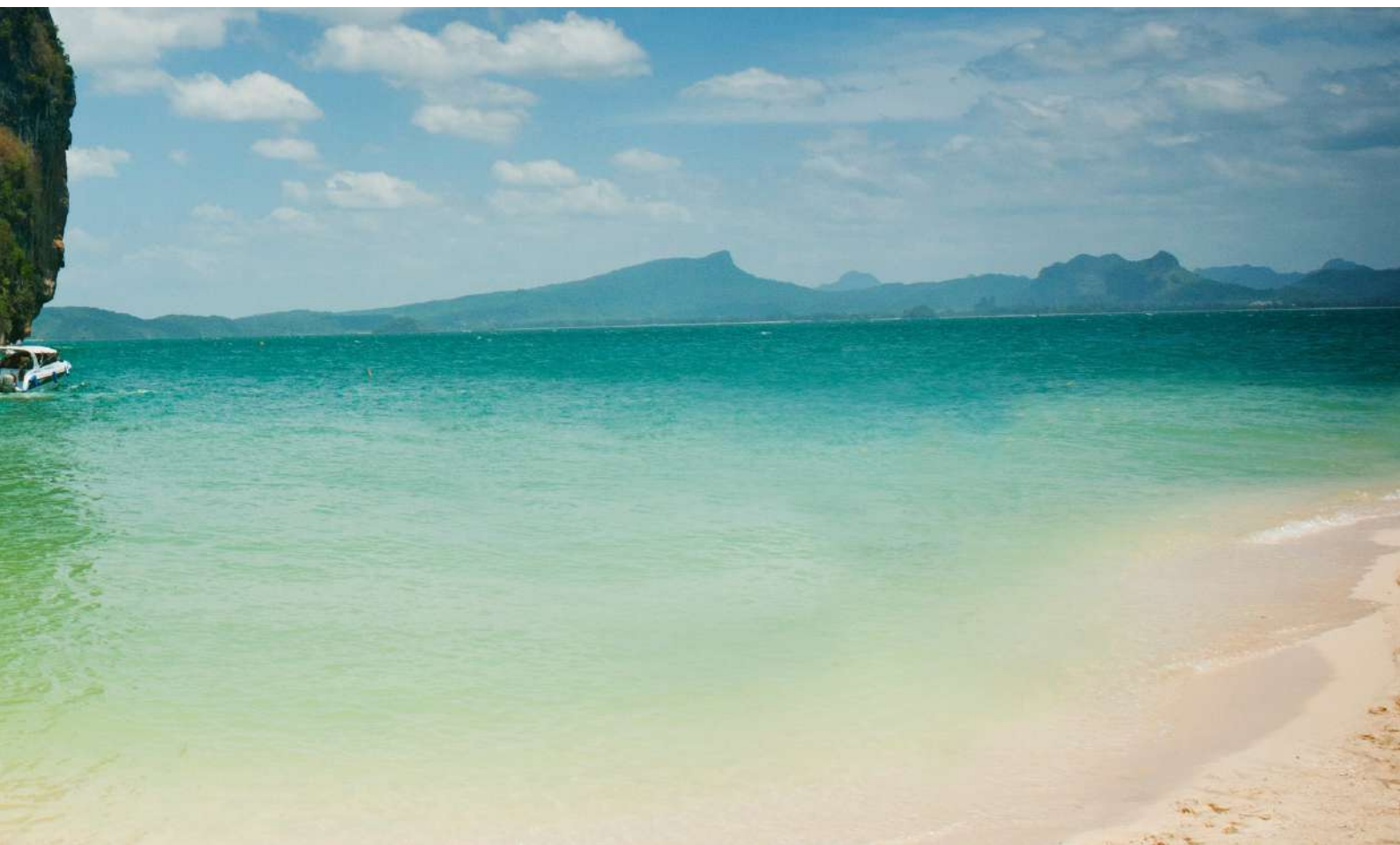
FINDINGS

3.1 The point of view of experts

The study conducted reveals that practitioners, experts and members of governmental bodies agree on the importance of extending the current efforts and creating an institute capable of enhancing MIL's national development through standard setting for MIL at local, regional and global levels.

The quantitative survey (first questionnaire to experts) shows that **experts and MIL practitioners strongly support the creation of the International MIL Institute.** The participants of the survey see in this initiative a series of benefits related to strengthening the already existing community of MIL practitioners as well as an opportunity to reinforce their individual efforts (activities, good practices, evaluation frameworks, etc.) and start joint development.

Almost all of the sampled experts (99%) think that an international **MIL Institute could open the possibility to develop initiatives** to improve the functioning of the community in relation to production of MIL resources, capacity building, joint research as well as communication, cooperation, exchanges and coordination relevant to these areas.

In the second questionnaire (open-ended questions to experts), the experts were asked how the creation of such Institute could help reinforce the international MIL community in terms of association, networking and production of common outcomes.

Experts think that the **creation of the Institute itself would call attention to MIL practices and current research**. Both groups, new and second time respondents, believe that the institute should work

hard on associating private, civic society and political actors, besides reinforcing the role researchers in the field can play to foster a stronger dialogue between practitioners (field work) and research outcomes (theoretical work) at all levels. The institute is then perceived as a "dual mediator between the government, private sector and the policy makers and between the policy makers and the citizens themselves" (R23: Q1).

As the results of the first survey show, experts think the institute should work on the "organization of events, seminars and conferences and manage a kind of repository of sources, literature and databases on MIL" (R2: Q1) to **help bring together the different activities, policies, programs and research being done worldwide**.

"By simply existing, such an institute would be a centre of attraction for those interested in this extraordinarily important yet misunderstood subject." (R1: Q1)
"It could broaden the MIL concept into a civilizational approach emphasizing cultural diversities" (R56: Q1).

They also believe the institute would give "legitimacy and credibility, containing all related disciplines which emerged in last decades" (R4: Q1) that relate to UNESCO's comprehensive definition of MIL. It "would help raise the profile and lend authority to MIL as a topic of significant policy interest" (R7: Q1).

As a somehow recent theoretical construct, experts believe that **the International MIL Institute's activity should also be centred on strengthening MIL as a research discipline** and on setting the basis for future actions. An international center for MIL should aim to "create enough awareness to help stakeholders understand what the issues are and what opportunities are available for partnerships and cooperation" (R9: Q1). Such approach, they believe, would bring higher attention to MIL and help the community build projects and knowledge founded on the same basis and approaches.

Some experts believe that the International MIL Institute would help to "show the importance of child protection and media education for young people and adults" (R14: Q1), which in turn could boost the attention the MIL discipline receives, at both political and academic levels.

In sum, the study reveals that the experts surveyed believe that the Institute would reinforce the international MIL community, as its creation would:

- Give more political relevance to MIL as a matter of public policy and hence help current practitioners to gain attention and legitimize their work.
- Serve as a knowledge hub, a repository and even a place to get information on projects and aid to develop MIL initiatives in different regions.
- Help develop joint research and international comparison/assessment schemes in order to create "key performance indicators (KPI) to measure the progress" (R40: Q1).
- "Elaborate a comprehensive strategy which could support countries to create their own MIL policy and legal frameworks for MIL development" (R30: Q1).
- Certificate "high-level learning and teaching

materials" (R57: Q1).

- Work as an umbrella to develop common understandings of MIL despite the approach being used in a context (information literacy; media studies; digital education, etc.).
- Form a transference hub between academy and individual (or associated) practitioners (civil society, NGOs).
- Help save time and efforts as quality information on content and contact/association possibilities would be open to all publics.
- Organize, and create MIL resources open to everybody.
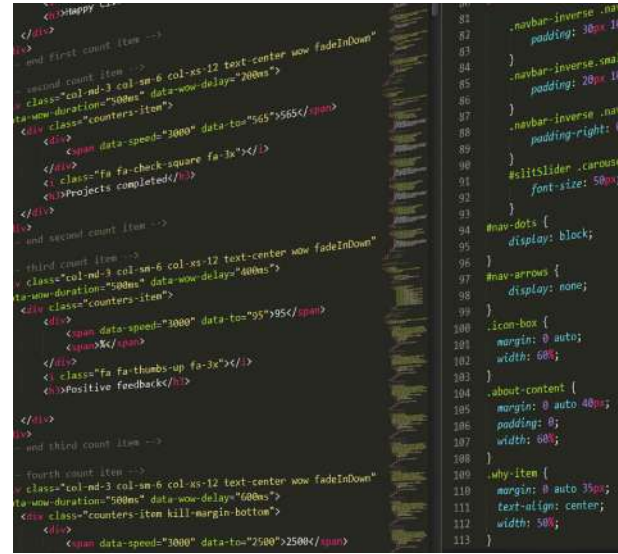
To assess and structure these general objectives in concrete actions and functions, some services related to the major objectives of the International MIL Institute (IMILI) were valued by the experts and industry companies surveyed. The general view regarding these areas of work is positive.

- Of the consulted experts, 89% say that the Institute could act as a **consultant for local and international institutions, organizations and governments**.
- A majority of 77% of them thinks it could develop and run courses and programs on MIL for students besides engaging in professional training, which adds to the 94% who state that the Institute should provide **access to education in the form of workshops and courses, accredited programs and joint university degrees through offline and online activities** (capacity building – Figure 3).
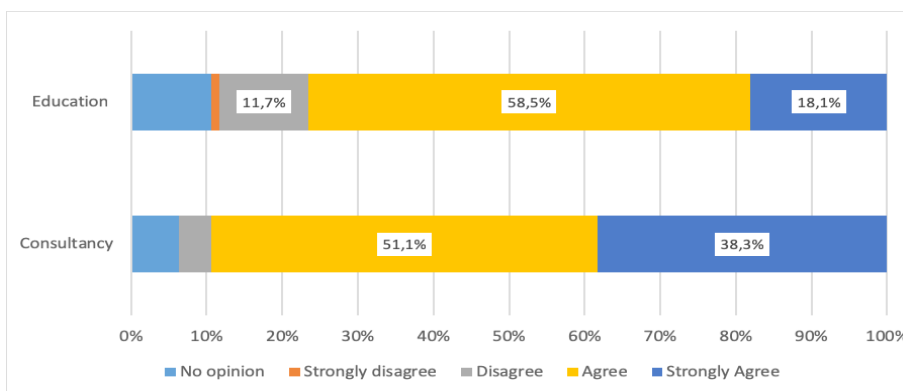

Figure 3. Services delivered by the Institute   Source: own elaboration. N=94

General functions

With the results mentioned above in mind, experts were asked in the first survey about their level of agreement with the functions proposed for the IMILI. Their answers reveal that **they strongly believe in the functions proposed (research, advocacy, capacity building, training and policy development).**

With regards to the **creation and delivery of MIL resources**, the experts surveyed believe that the Institute has the potential to achieve enhancement in their production and potential reach. (See figure 4).

- A majority of 96% thinks that the Institute should **disseminate and promote interactive communication related to the research results and publications among stakeholders**
- Also, 96% stress that it should support **the acquisition and curation of MIL resources** and catalogue, and make them accessible for users around the world through ensuring availability in multiple languages (access to resources).
- A majority of 94% believes that the institute **should publish materials and books** besides developing resources for educators, policy makers, and researchers on MIL (publications).

Figure 4. Level of agreement with the functions proposed for for the
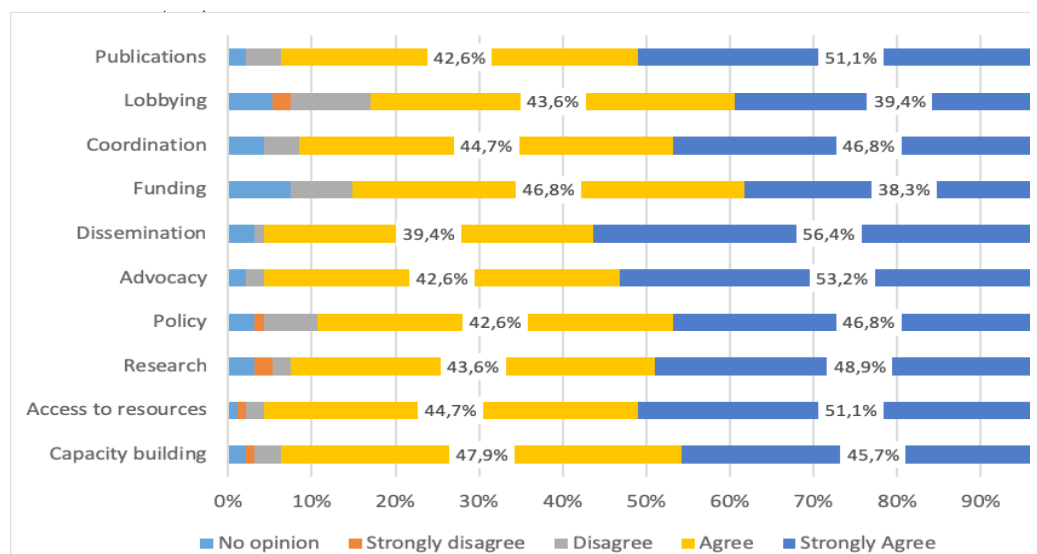

Source: own elaboration. N=94

Experts also agree on the fact that the structure of the International MIL Institute should include an arm for **training and research.** Many of the sampled experts emphasize on the following:

- The majority (94%) thinks that the institute should provide **access to education** in the form of workshops and courses, accredited programs and joint university degrees through offline and online activities (capacity building).
- Also, 93% say **it should focus on theoretical, applied and comparative research on MIL** education (research).

In relation to **administrative and networking functions,** experts believe in the importance of establishing **coordination** processes and joining efforts towards lobbying and fundraising:

- The institute should establish **coordination mechanisms** among stakeholders (coordination) (91.5% of the consulted experts emphasize on that).
- It should **help initiatives and actions around MIL (advocacy)** (96%)**.**
- **It should build connections with and among existing policies of governments, states and international institutions** in the regions where the participants of the Institute work **(policy)** (89%).
- The Institute should act as **a leverage to reach out to policy makers and decision makers (lobbying)** (83%).
- **It should look for and distribute resources among stakeholders (funding)** (85%).
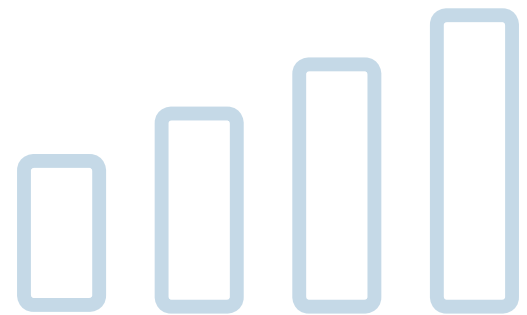
The second questionnaire asked the experts to **consider the functions mentioned above and to reflect on what services the MIL institute should provide and to whom.**

Both the first survey and the specific requirements for the feasibility study suggest three areas the International MIL Institute should cover: **capacity building, access to resources, research and policy advocacy**. As for the answers provided in the second survey, the functions and general services

of the institute could be organized under main units: Research and Innovation, Consultancy, Communication (R4: Q3), Education and Training (R11: Q3).
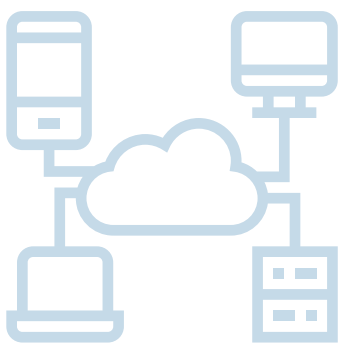
Experts believe **"research, advocacy and policy making are crucial"** (R5: Q3) for the development of a stronger MIL movement. They highlight the importance of disseminating research results and publications and building resources aimed at advocacy and normative guidance on public policy (R29: Q3). To achieve these goals, different services were recommended, such as creating a network for coordinated research, running a platform to disseminate journalist-focused MIL reports, including video press releases, and building channels **open to advocacy at different levels** (R52: Q3), which has been underlined underlined as one of the most

important due to the character and recognition of UNESCO worldwide.

These services should be aimed at monitoring the implementation of MIL and media services policy, besides creating assessment schemes to determine media and information literacy levels, which in turn must be implemented on a regular basis at the countries represented by the Institute (R30: Q3). Some experts believe that fostering standardization to measure and assess MIL (levels, policies, etc.) is a must to monitor its development and regional particularities (R57: Q3).

Experts also believe that the Institute should concentrate its efforts in training the trainers. Practitioners and professionals in the field of MIL should have access to different kinds of resources, which include a broad range of educational tools and programs. The idea of developing graduate degrees on MIL, in addition to Masters and PhD programs, has been strongly supported according to the results from both the first and second surveys. The experts surveyed agree on the fact that there are thousands of useful MIL resources that need to be curated, cataloged and offered through well organized educational offers. The International MIL Institute is seen as an organization capable of providing high quality resources and education on MIL.

The institute should try to deliver its services to targeted groups such as trainers, students, educational establishments, organizations and NGOs, governments, policy makers, media industry, among others.

MIL resources production

As the first survey showed, experts think the International MIL Institute should have functions related to the creation, curation and delivery of MIL resources, and that it should act as a disseminator and promoter of such outcomes. In the second survey they were asked **what kind of resources**
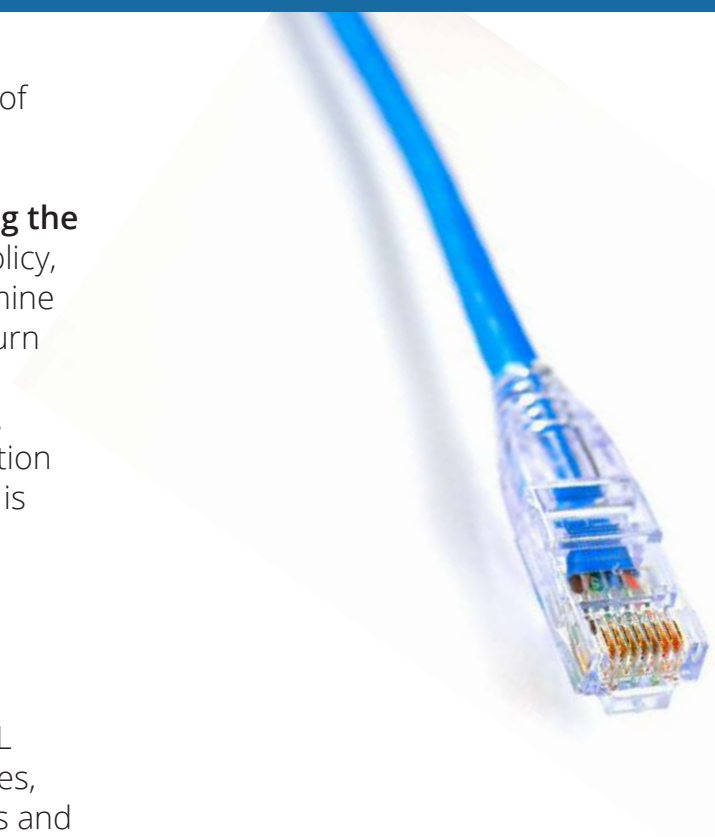
should be sponsored by the Institute to help foster MIL globally and how the creation of such institute could serve as an enabler for the production of these resources.

Experts consulted believe the Institute should create MIL resources but that it should depart from what has been done already. It should then work as a repository and ask the current experts for materials they use or have created in order to create a broad catalogue since the first moment. Some of the consulted experts say the Institute should consider the differences between countries and regions, and thus propose guidelines and resources that are open and adaptable to specific contexts. The institute, as set, should then include a repository of good practices/resources too, and offer tools and examples adjustable to the different contexts and

regions represented.

The IMILI should take into consideration that the "creation and dissemination of MIL resources is expensive and labor intensive and may be done more efficiently by local interests in individual countries" (R7: Q2). This means there is "no need to re-invent everything from scratch but to work on linking activities and archival resources" (R13: Q2) that already exist or have taken place. It could also focus on translating existing and useful MIL resources to more languages (R14: Q2). In order to create or classify valuable resources, it is important to "create international working groups of experts to develop these resources and disseminate them" (R18: Q2) besides building "inclusive partnerships between commercial and educational bodies across continents" (R36: Q2).

One of the priorities experts agree on is the need of creating a supra-platform that will facilitate the dissemination of research (R12: Q2). The Institute should act as a global observatory on MIL.

In light of this, experts believe that the Institute should begin fostering a specific international assessment scheme on MIL comprising all specific issues included in the MIL concept (R4: Q2; R28: Q2; R46: Q2). It could also act as a consultancy body and generate resources related to lobbying and advocacy for MIL funding and public policy.

As for education, there is a huge consensus around the idea that "the Institute should offer courses and workshops online and offline" (R11: Q2). This type of resources should give "priority to teacher training and media training" (R15: Q2). Training offered by the institute should be certified. Joint university degrees and specializations should be sponsored and made accessible from different countries and regions, and by different groups (students, trainers, policy makers). Experts believe that workshops, conferences and global meetings should accompany the different products issued. These scenarios should lead to crowdsourcing experiences and common research. Networking is then foreseen as one of the major

"The Institute should offer courses and workshops online and offline" (R11: Q2).
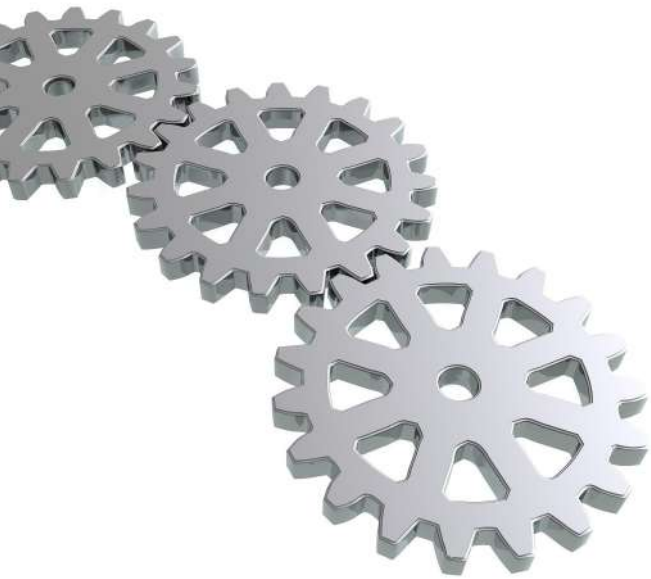
outcomes to be achieved by the Institute.

According to the experts surveyed, the following resources must be offered by the Institute:

- Yearbook to report MIL in the different countries and regions represented (R10: Q2).
- A web-platform that should include a repository of resources, good practices and information about research opportunities. Educational services should also be included in this platform.
- Resources aimed at training the trainers.
- Educational resources both for formal and informal education (such as curriculum development).
- Multilingual MIL kits (for educators and practitioners).
- Guidelines on how to lobby and advocate for MIL (R52: Q2).
- Policy papers and guidelines.
- Newsletter and general information on activities, conferences, research and funding opportunities.
- Formal training on MIL (certified).

Resources must be in multiple formats. Audiovisual archives could also be used by the institute in order to codify valuable material and make it accessible worldwide.

Research

The consulted experts highlighted the importance of research both from a theoretical and practical point of view. They think that comparative research and setting common theoretical frameworks could reinforce MIL as a discipline and strengthen the current and future actions in this field.

The second questionnaire asked the experts to give their advice on how the International MIL Institute could cooperate or coordinate with existing universities and other MIL institutions or organizations around the world to foster research and networking.

Answers to this question revealed several common points. The majority thinks that the institute should help "with publications by creating specific journals and grants for research projects" (R3: Q5). They also believe it would be necessary to "launch and

fund academic networks**8**" and that "more funding is needed for joint research projects" (R10: Q5). Having networking as a common goal, experts have stressed the importance of opening the institute to "work together with other initiatives" (R11: Q5). By doing so, it would guarantee a broader "overview of current research in different parts of the world" (R46: Q5).

As an international center for MIL, the institute would have to extend other fields of knowledge that have not been properly linked to MIL. It should focus on creating "coordinated activities through MIL to bring together diverse fields of science (such as arts, social sciences and technologies)" (R5: Q5). Joint research

---

8 References are made to programs such as (perhaps similiar like COST networks).

could then be accompanied by "rotating visiting scholars coming from various universities" in the future (R15: Q5). Experts also think that face to face meetings should be organized to introduce involved groups to each other and establish common research lines. In addition, the institute "should promote the establishment of good and effective national networks. This would be the best way to establish effective international networks of researchers" (R59: Q5).

It has been stressed by experts that the IMILI should try to help governments design policies and/or programs to foster research on MIL. It should also focus on promoting public policy guidelines based on practical and theoretical research (R6: Q5). In order to ensure these types of actions the Institute should find a way to sponsor scholarships. This should be done, according to the majority of experts surveyed, by encouraging "partnership agreements between the Institute and universities" (R22: Q5) and by "establishing a core group of leading universities with existing academic excellence in the practice and theory of media education" (R36: Q5). Research and experience in research on MIL are seen as main variables when thinking of creating a structure capable of developing the objectives of the institute.

The research strategy should also adopt a comprehensive plan to approach national and international institutions (R8: Q5) as the institute itself could act as a leverage to reach out to policy and decision makers. It should "build connections with key government agencies, policy makers, decision makers which supervise the existing universities, MIL related institutions, and/or organizations" (R31: Q5). In turn, these agreements should lead to common research and surveys, led by the institute and partner universities.

Consultancy

According to a large majority of experts, the Institute should act as a leverage to reach out to policy makers and decision makers building connections with and among existing governmental policies and stakeholders. The experts stated that the Institute should act as a consultancy body for local and international institutions, organizations and governments.

Seen as a consultancy body, the second survey asked the experts regarding how the MIL Institute could cooperate with governments and decision makers around the world.

To this regard, some experts think "the influence the Institute could have on policy makers and governments locally in many countries would be minimal" (R38: Q6). These types of considerations call attention to the fact that actions carried out by the institute must take into account the complexity of some contexts and plan different strategies and

"the Institute should act as a leverage to reach out to policy makers and decision makers building connections with and among existing governmental policies and stakeholders"

guidelines adjustable to local environments. "UNESCO offices should definitely give support in the regional basis, but the operation should give open access to different institutions" (R41: Q6); "it would be essential to build a link between the institute and national experts" (R53: Q6) with lobbying capacity. To enhance the institute's lobbying capacity, consultancy should focus on building reputation and trust around the organization and MIL itself (R55: Q6).

As for many other services, responses show that research on MIL should lead the consultancy processes: "if MIL Institute strives to develop an international MIL framework with evaluation and assessment, it would have the legitimacy to cooperate with governments because "information is power"" (R4: Q6). For instance, as an external consultant, the "MIL Institute could assist governments in the development of compulsory and elective courses for the formal education" (R61: Q6).

Consultancy, as seen by experts, should prioritize current unattended (or partially attended) issues. It
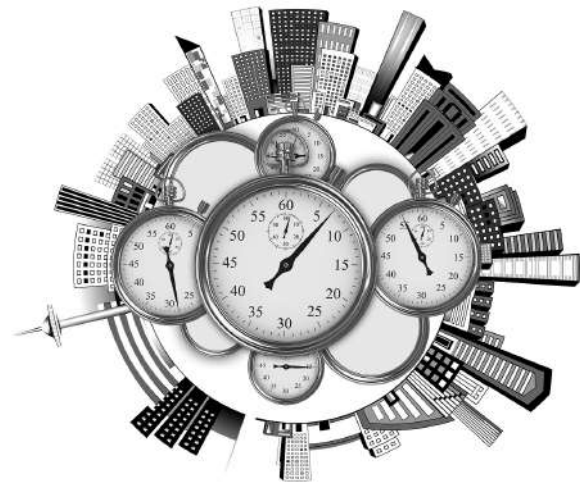
should then focus on opening spaces for "further discussion at the policy level of implementation, monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness of existing initiatives" (R7: Q6). This could be done by delivering policy recommendations based on research and analysis of best practices, which should include the evaluation of current MIL policies (R10: Q6). The institute, as a consultant, should provide useful insights to help local agencies in influencing media regulatory authorities, public service medias (PSM), NGOs, civil society, assigned media public authorities, as well as education and ICT authorities (R23: Q6).

As a part of the research and consultancy arm, the institute could provide yearly reports on the state of MIL and constantly produce reports on hot topics (e.g. online youth radicalization) (R15: Q6). Experts also believe such an institute should prepare and disseminate policy briefs and general

recommendations to national governments and international bodies (R18: Q6).

As a linkage to its training/education arm, the institute should also offer training to experts on lobbying, which must be accompanied by UNESCO's commitment to hold special events on MIL aimed at representatives from governments, legislative bodies and regulators. These offers and "cooperation should be provided through national coordinators, who could serve as a bridge between the MIL Institute leaders and local governments" (R29: Q6).

Funding

As confirmed, mixed funding mechanisms must be established to maintain the Institute and generate opportunities for the MIL community. According to the experts surveyed, the **financial model** of the International MIL Institute should respond to both an **internal and an external strategy**. A majority of 94% of the consulted experts believes it should seek funding within UNESCO and other UN Agencies. While, 72% think it should also seek funding from the private sector:
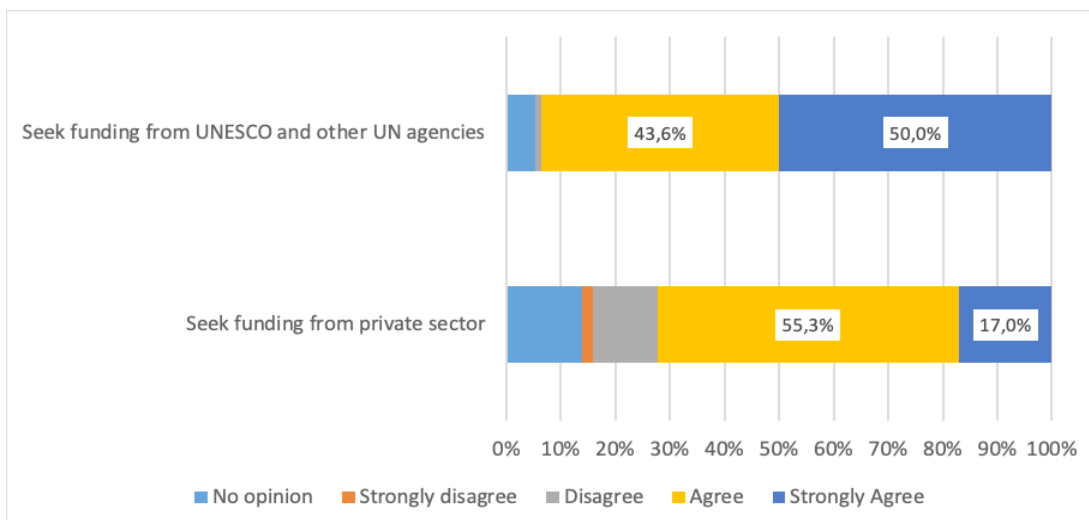

Figure 5. Funding of the Institute   Source: own elaboration. N=94

Experts emphasized that the financial model of the Institute should respond to a comprehensive strategy, meaning that it should seek funding within UNESCO and other UN agencies and also from the private sector.

The institute should seek funding from UN agencies and other international donor agencies as well as foundations (R9: Q9).

Information obtained from the second experts survey, which inquired about a proper funding model for the International MIL Institute, suggests UNESCO should seek for public funding mainly (R2: Q9). This funding could come from "not only UNESCO and UN, but also from national and regional governments for local delegations" (R3: Q9) (as the European Union (R8: Q9)). Nevertheless, experts think that a mixed model with both public and private funding is possible if private interests do not intervene (R23: Q9). Secondary funding methods were also mentioned, such as establishing different fundraising strategies, like a project-based funding, or providing services to third parties (education, consultancy).

The researchers surveyed agree on the fact that research could be funded through local and international research bodies that offer grants and generous funds to develop R&D projects (R5: Q9;R6: Q9;R27: Q9;R48: Q9).

3.2 Industries and stakeholders

For the quantitative survey addressed to industry partners, 35 responses were collected from different media (TV, Radio, Press), agencies and other sectors related to the media and information service **the creation of the International MIL Institute and express their interest to cooperate with it.**

- Half of the industry companies surveyed are developing MIL initiatives. These industry companies and also those who are not yet developing MIL initiatives expressed their interest to have a reference such as the International MIL institute.

- Related to the functions of the International MIL Institute, a high percentage (88.9%) of the surveyed industry companies are interested in capacity building, research, training, advocacy and policy.

- Regarding the training, all the possibilities offered are valorized; joint degrees between universities, PhD programs, MOOCs with a certificate, workshops, etc. and interest is widely expressed in these training activities (83.3%). The companies have also expressed interest in collaborating to deliver these educational programs (94.44%).

- A high percentage of the industry companies consulted expressed their motivation for MIL research (94.4%).

- Regarding the possible role that industry companies could play in the International MIL Institute, there is a diversity in the responses collected; offering sponsorships, financial support, research collaboration, dissemination of the activities in the media, participation in educational activities and workshops, advocacy, lobbying, capacity building and policy development.

3.3 Benchmarking, learning from others

To set the foundations and aims of the International MIL Institute, it is necessary to know which efforts and actions have been taking place globally in the field of Media and Information Literacy as well as in other related sectors. **Following the methodology of a benchmarking analysis, two lists of different types of organizational models were processed** (see annexes 1 and 2), one list with institutions closely related to MIL and another with those who have a focus on youth, media, education and technologies.
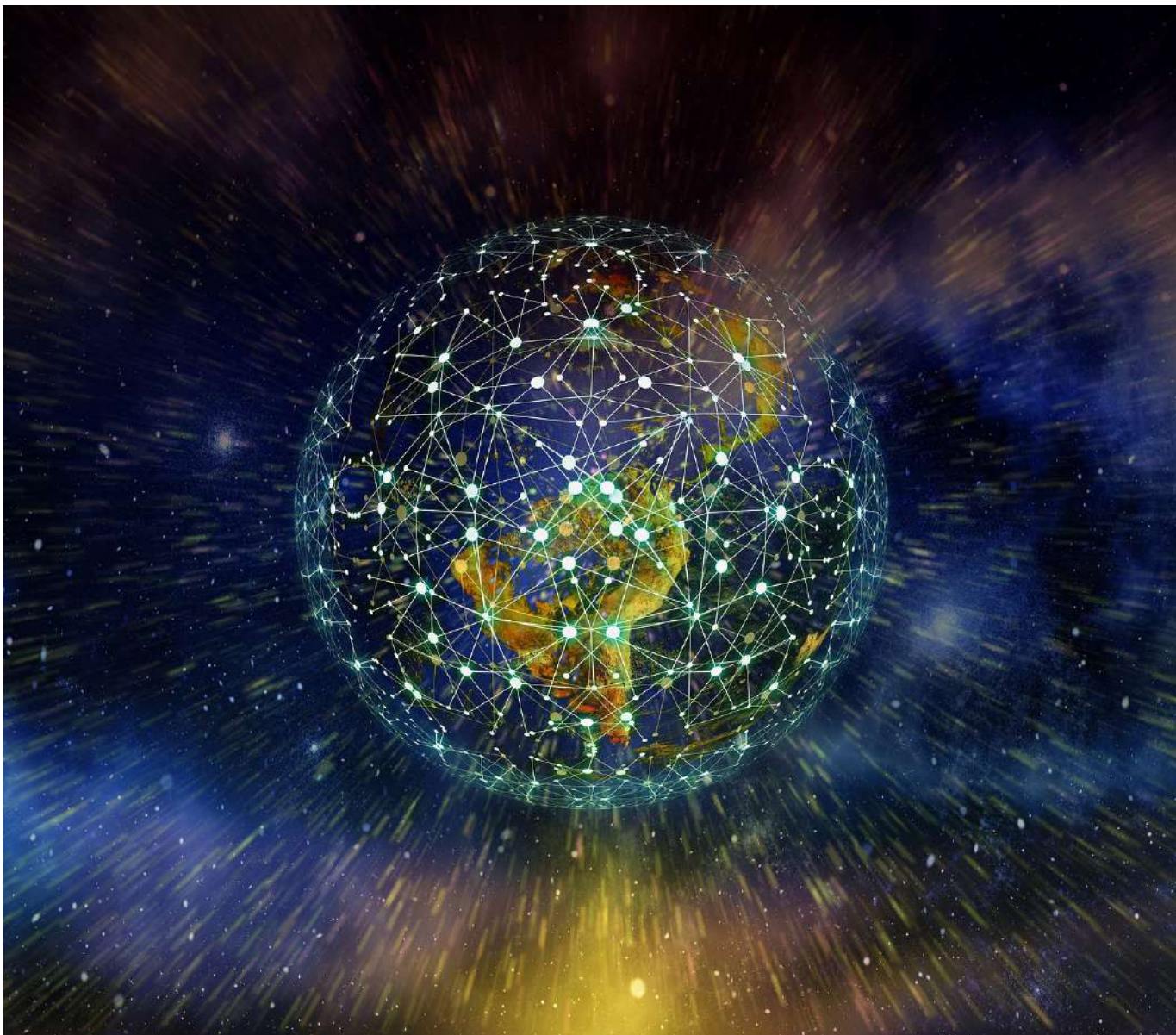
The sample is composed of networks, associations, state institutions, as well as NGOs, Professional Associations, Academic Research Institutes and Think Tanks, Academia Research Institutes and Think Tanks, as divided by the European Commission (EC) in the Media Literacy Expert Group.

Identifying similar initiatives

First, it should be emphasized that the proposed International MIL Institute would be the first of its kind, given that such an Institute with these characteristics does not exist anywhere in the world. But we have selected MIL organizations that are playing a role in this field to extract some key observations that could be useful for the definition of the International MIL Institute.

- These initiatives are mostly national, the few international ones have an impact in one certain continent (for example: Europe-wide or USA), exceptional cases address global issues. **The International MIL Institute could cover this gap, guaranteeing representation according to UNESCO's geographical configuration of the world.**
- None of these institutions is carrying out the combined set of objectives at an international level as the ones foreseen for the International MIL Institute, based on a set of criteria.. **The International MIL Institute could help to search, create categories, prepare meta data for material already-developed and create new ones. It should seek to cover several areas aiming at strengthening MIL as a discipline and a common practice.**
- Few institutions develop action-research based projects or educational practice-based research. There **is a need for international coordination in MIL research; the International MIL Institute could help to meet this aim.**
- The main target groups of the selected institutions are primarily teachers (19), researchers (15), students (11) and parents (9). **The MIL Institute**

should develop strategies to include all stakeholders related to MIL without leaving any actors behind. The industry companies for instance are to be included in this International MIL institute.
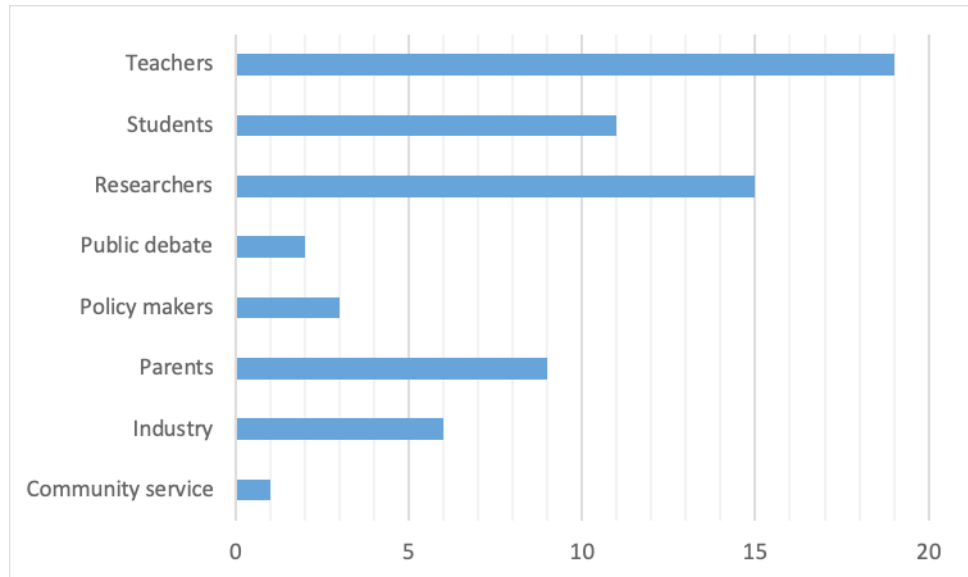
Source: own elaboration.

Figure 2. Target Audience of current organizations (# of organizations.)

- Advocacy and public policy consultations are developed by a minority of the organizations analysed (32%). **The MIL Institute could serve as a consultancy body and propose different educational services to countries.**
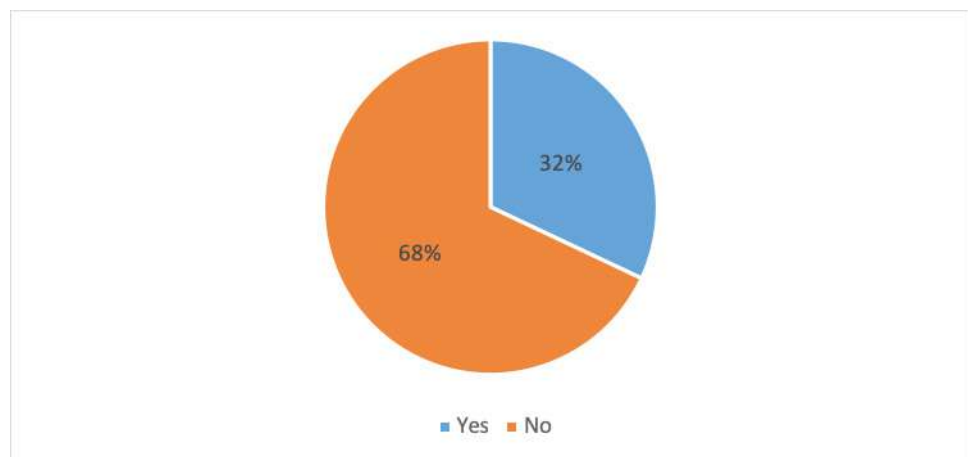
Source: own elaboration.

Figure 3. Public policy consultation by MIL organizations

- The general funding of the organizations that were analysed comes from Member States and

is also supported by sponsoring institutions and foundations. **Apart of State-level aid, the MIL Institute sshould seek funding both inside the UN agencies and within the private sector.**

Conclusions of benchmarking

As demonstrated, an ideal international institute for MIL should be comprehensive and capable of addressing concerns about MIL on a global level Since the purpose of the institute is to enhance MIL at all levels, the services offered should provide general basic guidance to the different interested parties. Specific services are to be provided on demand.

Not a single MIL organization focuses on providing certified training on MIL or university degrees. The international MIL Institute should work hard on gathering experts from different universities around the world and establishing networks to provide joint degree programs on MIL. MIL Education is one of the main objectives the institute should develop in the mid to long term.

UNESCO has an existing unit that addresses issues concerning MIL, media and society through general services. Its recognition has led to the celebration of different forums and gatherings, besides the issuance of guidelines on several topics related to assessment, policy making and curriculum development related
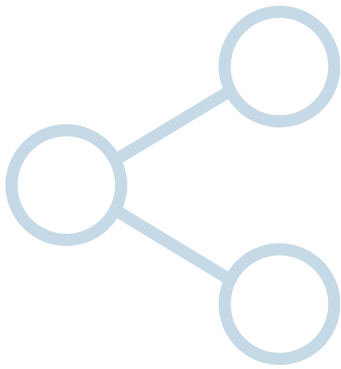
to MIL. These efforts by UNESCO and the MILID Network should be continued and strengthened by other organizations focusing on the local contexts. As a research center, the institute can conduct comparative research to achieve inclusive guidelines applicable to several contexts.

As an institution representing all regions of the world, the **International MIL institute** will issue and translate resources into different languages, which will help to enrich the current MIL efforts globally. Resources created by the institute should also provide guidelines on how to advocate and lobby for MIL. Since these last two objectives might mainly depend on local factors, the institute should concentrate on creating easy-to-adapt guidelines and tips, which must take into consideration the local context and thus concentrate on the main steps and topics to gain support locally. Partnerships with local institutions/stakeholders and governments should lead to efficient and stronger advocacy capability.

DEFINING THE INSTITUTE

The **International MIL Institute (IMILI, hereinafter)** must follow different functions and assure a viable structure which leads to accomplishing the goals established for its creation. The definition of the Institute is based on the original concept proposed by UNESCO and on the suggestions proposed by the experts surveyed

4.1 Functions

According to the original concept note, the IMILI should build on existing MIL actions and partnerships to support stakeholders in their efforts to utilize and implement the resources that have been developed.

To that end, the IMILI should focus on knowledge development and sharing. It should elaborate on proven knowledge and best practices, to be a main creator and coordinator of knowledge regarding media and information literacy in the global system – through three main areas:

- **Research and Policy Advocacy:** the IMILI will represent a focused action or a concrete initiative within the UNESCO/UNAOC Network on MILID, which is the research arm of GAPMIL. Research carried out by the Institute will primarily contribute to the implementation of the UNESCO Global MIL Assessment Framework resource, MIL Policy and Strategy Guidelines and an International Media and Information Literacy Observatory. The International MIL Observatory will be complementary to regional level observatories.
- **Capacity building:** providing access to education in the form of workshops and courses. These could include accredited programs, university degrees
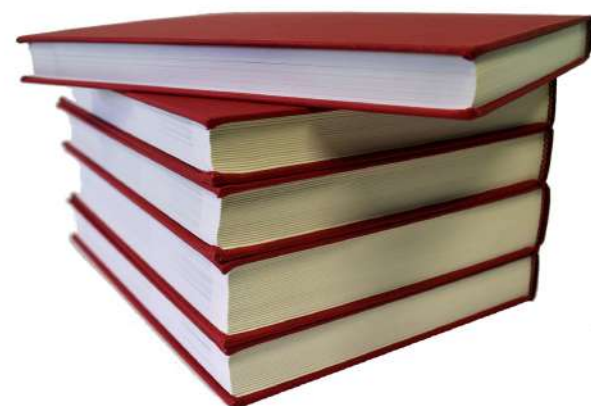
and other training certificates. Those who have completed workshops or courses through the IMILI will receive internationally recognized certification. They will be in a position to return to their own areas of work and support others interested in the field.

- **Access to Resources:** the IMILI will support the acquisition and curation of MIL resources, catalogued and made accessible.

4.2 General functions

The general functions of the International MIL Institute will be;

- Research
- Education
- Capacity Building
- Advocacy
- Policy Development

4.3 Structure

4.3.1 Principles

The proposed structure for the International MIL Institute responds to both, the original proposals by UNESCO and the recommendations made by the experts surveyed. The following recommendations guide the structure described within this report.

Experts around the world **strongly support the idea of creating an International MIL Institute**. However, some characteristics must be considered. The structure of such initiative must follow the subsequent recommendations:

1. **UNESCO MILID Network should have a leading role in establishing a Network of Universities with a central point of coordination, while taking into consideration the sufficient level of decentralization needed to guarantee autonomy and coordination between different partners and regions.**

   Experts agree on the idea of having a central office and regional headquarters but do not strongly support the creation of a highly centralized organization. Inclusion of third parties and general MIL related stakeholders should be fostered. Thus, decision making processes, production of resources and other outcomes could integrate both theoretical and practical approaches to MIL.

2. **A Coordination Unit based on universities could be created but practitioners and supporters outside the academia must find a place within the organization too**.

   Experts do believe that a number of about 10 core universities should together act as a coordinating unit within the institute, but they think this unit should be open to other actors. UNESCO MILID Network should then propose a mixed structure or an extra unit to address all participants' concerns.

3. **All UNESCO regions of the world must be included and should be represented.**

   Experts have stressed that all regions of the world should be part of this initiative. Universities and other stakeholders should be taken into account by the institute. As said, a comprehensive coordination unit must be created which must respond to geographical and expertise criteria.

4. **Functions of the Institute should be comprehensive and should cover several areas aiming at strengthening MIL as a discipline and a common practice.**
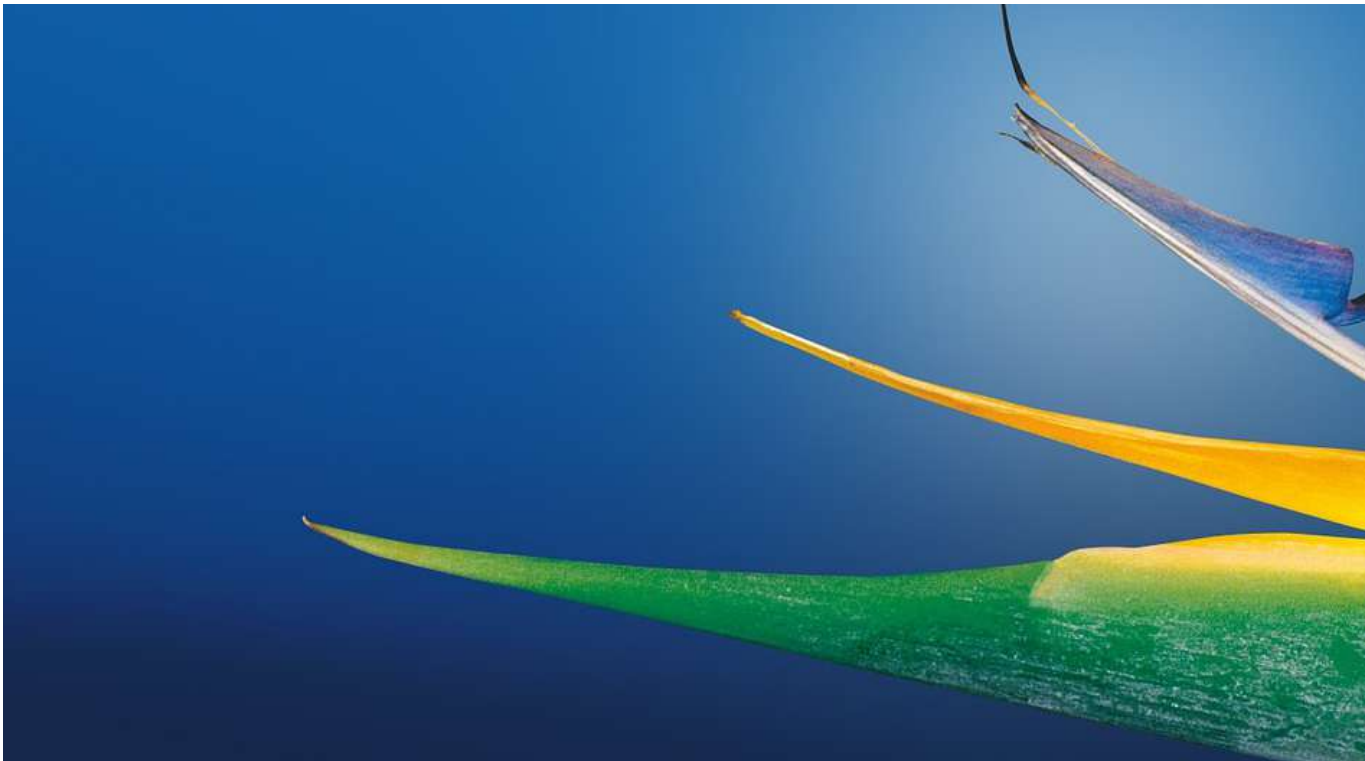
Experts strongly support functions related to capacity building; access to MIL resources; research on MIL; policy counseling; advocacy; dissemination; funding; coordination; lobbying and publications.

5. **International MIL Institute could serve as a consultancy body and propose different educational services.**

   Experts consulted think that the institute should serve as a consultancy body for local and international institutions, organizations and governments. They also support the idea of the institute developing and running paid courses and programs on MIL for students as well as other types of professional training.

6. **UNESCO MILID Network should ask for funding both inside UN agencies and within the private sector.**

   Experts strongly support the idea of UNESCO MILID Network seeking funding to run the institute. UNESCO via different kinds of actors, which include the private sector, should then ensure funding.

4.3.2 General structure

This study reveals that the MIL community still needs to join efforts all around the world. However,at the same time, it shows that there is a strong belief in the potential of creating an international institute for MIL as an effective way to foster cooperation and enhance coworking to complement what GAPMIL is already doing.

The general structure would be composed of a central core **with a few universities as coordinating units** to achieve its objectives with a diverse geographic representation. At the same time, collaboration with different stakeholders including industry companies is to be extended.

The International MIL Institute should provide access to resources and training as well as consultancy services in different regions of the world. As the

majority of experts suggest, such a governing and operational structure should depart from what already exists and work in order to reinforce and foster better communication and networking and thus promote MIL globally.

The suggested geographical representation structure includes three levels: hub center; regional centers and local offices.

The Hub Center should be based in one university/ research center. This institution should act as the hub for the institute overall. One university per region should act a satellite of the hub.

The Regional Centers .will be represented by one university or research center. This institution should act as the host for the Institute in that region acting as a "satellite". The Local Offices will be linked to its regional center

4.3.3 Units

In order to simplify the function of the institute and ensure the accomplishment of its principal objectives, five main units are proposed.

- **Education Unit**

This unit aims to develop actions related to capacity building in the field of MIL. It is the unit that should support teachers, educators and CSOs, foster MIL related competencies at different levels and seek academic accreditation of the institute's own and joint educational offers.

In the short term, this unit should create both online and offline MIL courses (MOOCs and blended learning programs). In the mid-long term, it should offer both masters and PhD programs.

Participation of universities is crucial as this unit must be integrated by highly recognized institutions capable of providing high quality education through the institute.

The education unit must guarantee operational capacity to curate and catalogue current MIL resources as well as to produce basic guidelines and practical resources on MIL, especially related current issues.

- **Research Unit**

The research unit aims at providing theoretical and applied research outcomes to the MIL community. Its main purpose is to conduct experimental and prospective studies, to develop adaptable and well structured MIL assessment schemes and to foster innovation in this field.

The network of universities is also crucial in this unit. Research experience gained by several centers should be exploited to benefit a larger number of researchers interested in MIL.

- **Information and Communication Unit**

This unit aims to disseminate and constantly promote the works done by the institute and partner institutions. It should guarantee access to resources, publication of new material and dissemination of research outcomes.

- **Policy and Advocacy Unit**

This unit (or sub-unit) is part of the Research Unit. Its principal objective is to support governments and other organizations to articulate MIL policies. These services are also meant for organizations and other types of initiatives willing to develop MIL projects.

- **Management and funding Unit**

A separate unit should concentrate on the financial management of the institute. This must include its operative costs and research projects funding. This unit should seek funds to help the network of universities to achieve the goals of the Institute.

4.3.4 Organization

As emphasized, the structure of the institute should be built on what already exists and runs. Having this in mind, the proposed structure integrates both the GAPMIL and MILID networks.

The GAPMIL (Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information Literacy) "is a groundbreaking effort to promote international cooperation to ensure that all citizens have access to media and information competencies" (UNESCO, n.d.); it is a pioneering initiative. The GAPMIL was formally launched in 2013 at Abuja, Nigeria.
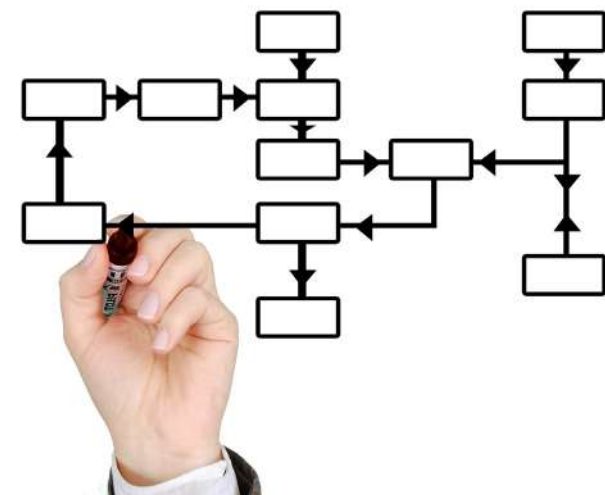
Objectives of GAPMIL focus on (UNESCO, n.d.):

- *articulating concrete partnerships to drive MIL development and impact globally;*
- *enabling the MIL community to speak as one voice on certain critical matters, particularly as it relates to policies;*
- further deepening the strategy for MIL to be treated as a composite concept by providing a common platform for MIL's related networks and associations globally.

Since developing MIL has become a priority, this joint initiative by UNESCO and United Nation Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) has seen a strong positive growth, organizing its representation by local regional chapters. Up to date several chapters have been constituted: Europe-North America; Latin America and the Caribe; Arab states and Africa. As part of its ongoing work, UNESCO has a lead role in the GAPMIL, in cooperation with the universities of the MILID network.

The International University Network on Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue (UNESCO/UNAOC-MILID) is the research arm of GAPMIL. The UNESCO/UNAOC-MILID's aim is "to ensure that the collective knowledge and expertise are not only shared, but are also reflected in the elaboration of strategic projects at national, regional and international levels" (UNESCO, n.d.b.).

The objectives/activities of MILID focus on (UNESCO, n.d.b.):

- *Research: act as an Observatory for the critical assessment of the role of MILID, contribute to the development of the joint UNESCO/UNAOC International Clearinghouse on MIL and preparation of related publications;*
- *Education: help to diffuse MILID at all levels of the formal education system and advocate for the same in related media production practices; this will include partnerships to adapt and pilot the MIL Curriculum for Teachers;*
- *Participation: promote actions aimed at encouraging citizen participation and at involving different stakeholders, such as community-based MIL projects and youth-media initiatives.*
- *The MILID Yearbook*

Since 2013, MILID has been issuing the MILID Yearbook in collaboration with UNESCO, UNAOC and the International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media at NORDICOM.

Governing Board

The governing board of the International MIL Institute should be formed by members of the MILID Network; only universities can be part of this arm of GAPMIL. UNESCO should also be represented in the board, and and including other partners should be discussed.

Members of the governing board will be the leading researchers at the hub center and regional centers.

These universities must demonstrate both operative capacity and MIL research-related experience.

The following bodies are to be set by the board: Management and Funding; Scientific Council and Regional Administration.

Management and funding

As for management and funding, both UNESCO and the leading universities should hold shared responsibility.

The leading universities should guarantee operative capacity related to research and resources production, as well as capacity to conduct consultancy projects and provide services in this regard. They should also be able to guarantee their own funding to maintain the basic functioning of the institute.

Regarding joint degrees and future educational services to be provided by the institute, co-administrative tasks should be organized and agreed on by UNESCO and the universities involved.

Scientific Council

The institute should guarantee research (empirical) –based outcomes. A scientific council must ensure both methodological guidance and quality control.

The governing board should decide its composition based on participation and interests of stakeholders (universities part of the MILID network) in becoming part of the institute.
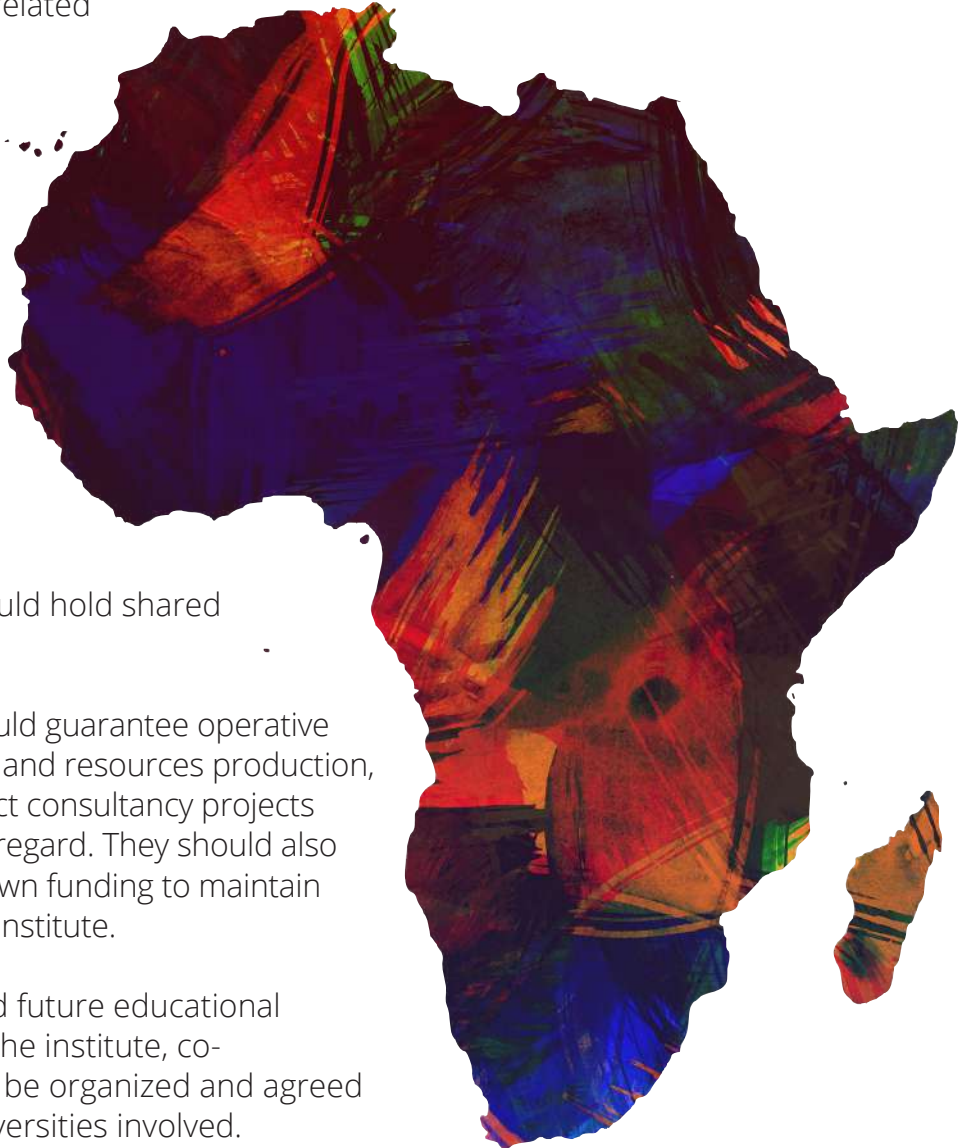
Education

The Scientific Council should decide and approve the institute's actions related to providing education and the promotion of specific courses and educational resources

Research

The Scientific Council should ensure quality and methodological assistance for all research done by the institute at an international level and provide guidance and support to local projects when needed.

Consultancy

The Research Council should assure quality and methodological assistance for all consultancy projects done by the institute at an international level and provide guidance and support to local projects when needed.

4.3.5 Regional administration

Regional administration will be assured by the Governing Board as Regional Centers, which are part of the board, will in turn be heads of each region represented, and thus duplicate a similar administrative structure with regional universities and other organizations. The regional centers should appoint a National Head at each country represented (university-based).

National Heads

Collaboration with local parties should help in achieving global goals of dissemination and educational offers, and centralization of actions. This can take place by establishing regional centers and national heads, which should help ensure a smooth and functional structure for research, assessment, consultancy and providing educational and other

services related to MIL.

The institute should be nurtured by the experience GAPMIL and MILID can provide. The following figure represents the suggested structure for regional actions of the institute. The figure shows that at the regional level the observatories, which should be formed both by the GAPMIL regional chapters and the Regional Centers, will serve to join actions from third parties, NGOs and other types of organizations interested in MIL.
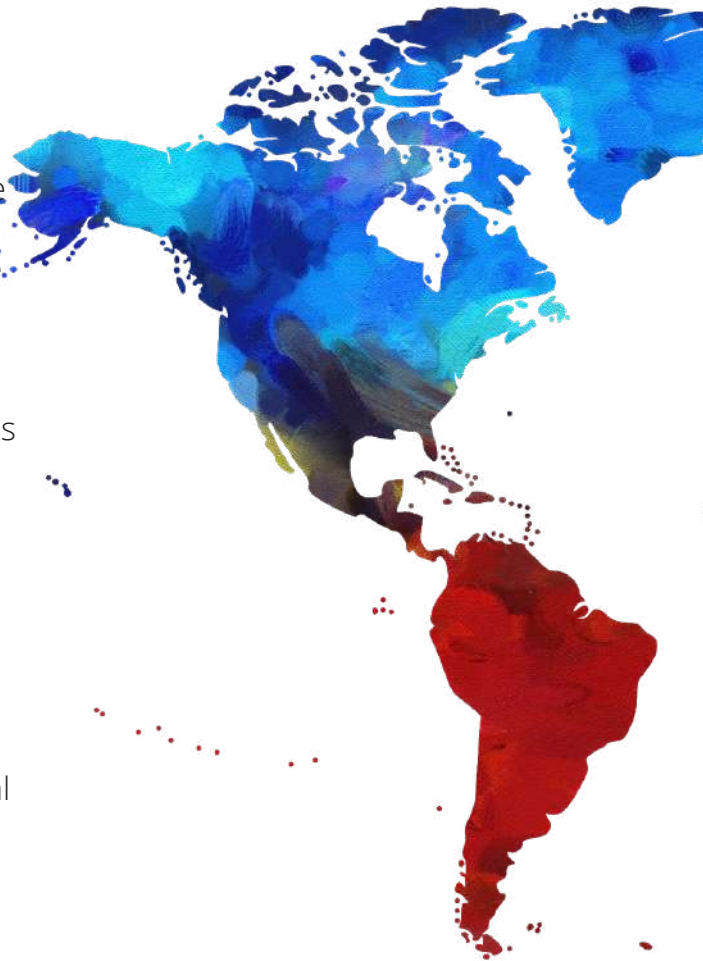
GAPMIL Regional Chapters

As the International MIL Institute cannot guarantee local aspects related to research and collaboration with stakeholders outside the university network, non-university parties should participate at the local level.

GAPMIL[9] should then serve as a major structure to help promote and localize the Institute worldwide.
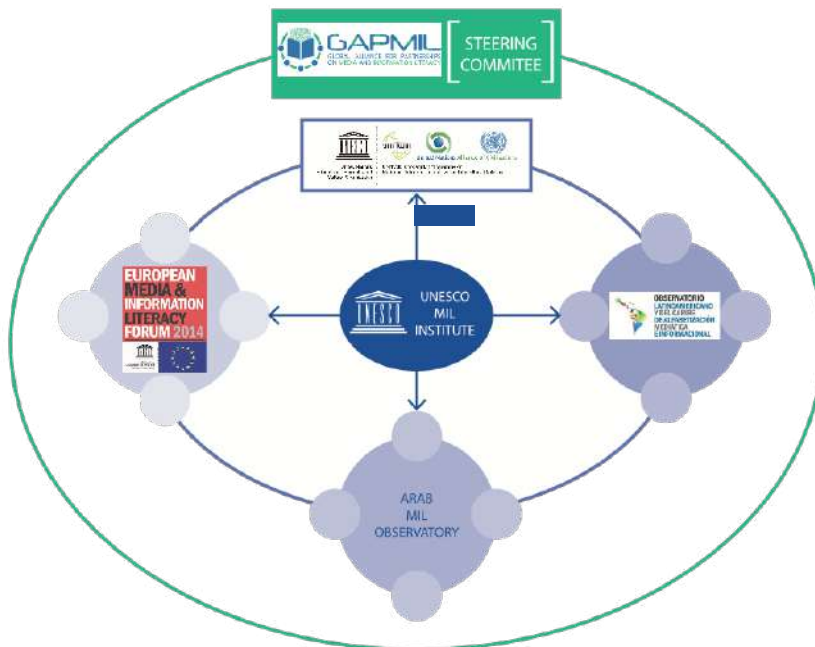

Figure 7. Suggested Structure

---

9   GAPMIL allows the participation of organizations outside the university and already has several initiatives associated.

REFERENCES

European Comission. (n.d.). Media Literacy. Retrieved January 22, 2019, from https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/audiovisual-policies/literacy_en

UNESCO. (n.d.). *UNESCO*. Obtenido de Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information Literacy: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/media-development/media-literacy/global-alliance-for-partnerships-on-media-and-information-literacy/about-gapmil/

UNESCO. (n.d.b.). *UNESCO*. Obtenido de Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue University Network: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/media-development/media-literacy/global-alliance-for-partnerships-on-media-and-information-literacy/milid-network/

UNESCO. (n.d.). MIL UNESCO. Retrieved January 22, 2019, from http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/capacity-building-tools/media-and-information-literacy/