

Towards inclusive media literacy

— *Instructional principles* —



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More than 100 professionals developing and implementing media literacy or media-related skills in their own practice have been consulted in the process of creating the instructional principles. The principles are based on a survey and individual interviews of professionals. In addition, previous research and expert comments have been used to create the instructional principles. In addition to National Audiovisual Institute's media education team, the project's national advisory board and group of stakeholders, participants in the Media Education Forum workshops, and the Adult Inclusive Media Network have been involved. Thank you to everyone involved!

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The material has been created as part of the Inclusive and Creative Media Education (ICME) project. The project is coordinated by the Finnish National Audiovisual Institute and is carried out together with the Italian University of Florence and the North Macedonian Institute of Communication Studies. The project aims to develop operational models of innovative media literacy activities from inclusive and creative perspectives.



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Introduction

In a media-saturated world, media literacy is an essential skill for each of us. Therefore, it is important to look for ways to develop media literacy equity.

While media literacy is important for everyone, different people may have different needs. There is also no single right way to develop media literacy—there are many possibilities. This encourages us to think about media literacy and the work to promote it from the perspective of the people involved.

Developing inclusive media literacy work is not a simple or easy goal. It requires time, commitment, experimentation, and learning. However, there is always an opportunity for everyone to do something. You can take small steps and you do not have to do everything on your own. The important thing is to start with courage, even if you do not know everything beforehand.

Development is a shared process: everyone can learn from others and everyone has something to teach others. Activities can be planned and implemented independently, with a partner or colleague, with stakeholders and networks, or together with the participants. Leadership, planning, and structure are important in creating the conditions for equal work.

These instructional principles will serve as a checklist and help you to reflect and find ways to improve your own practice. Rather than providing ready-made content, the instructional principles will help you to get started or to develop your work further. They are not a precise instruction, but a collection of perspectives, considerations, and advice to help you plan your activities from your own point of view. They are also a basis for discussion and for identifying your own strengths. You can start by looking at them, for example, from the principle you consider the most important.

The instructional principles are discussed from the perspectives of media education practices, material production, and communication. To help you put them into practice, they include examples of different ways of working and practical tips. The example list is not exhaustive.

Please feel free to adapt the instructional principles and their content to suit your own work. You can also supplement and develop them based on your experience and expertise. You can also find the principles in a table form in the annex.

Instructional principles to design inclusive media literacy

1. Find out the guidelines and plan activities accordingly;
2. Reflect on your own activities, attitudes, competences, and development needs;
3. Review your resources and plan your media education within them;
4. Cooperate where possible;
5. Use content and materials that support equality;
6. Implement media education in a participatory and context-oriented manner;
7. Increase participation in all phases of the operation;
8. Take care of accessibility;
9. Create a safer space to learn and act;
10. Be ready to adjust according to the situation.

Instructional principles are not in order of importance. They are not mutually exclusive but overlap and support each other. The sequential numbers are intended to facilitate discussion of the principles.



1. Find out the guidelines and plan activities accordingly

Media education and equality are governed by a number of laws and other guidelines. Practical action is also guided by a wide range of plans. Find out which of these documents are binding on you and which guide your actions—taking into account media education for equality.

When developing your activities, take into account all the guidelines and plans that apply to your activities. If you have the opportunity to influence the content of your organization's plans, try to develop them in a way that takes better account of equality. Set both long- and short-term objectives for your media education activities, based on your guidelines and plans to build equality in the long term.

Make the relationship between the media education material you produce and use, and the policies that guide it, visible so that the user is aware of the link. Also take into account your organization's communication plan. Seek to develop it in a way that supports equality, based on lessons learned, and plan your communication accordingly.

Examples of documents that are guiding inclusive media literacy work:

- [Media literacy in Finland: National media education policy](#)
- Human Rights Treaties
- [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- [UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General comment on children's rights in relation to the digital environment](#)
- [Lanzarote Convention](#)
- [EU DigComp Framework](#)
- [EU General Data Protection Regulation](#)

Practical tip

List all the national and international laws, policies, guidelines and plans that are binding or guiding your inclusive media literacy work.



2. Reflect on your own activities, attitudes, competences, and development needs

Reflective work is a cyclical process, repeated alongside other work. Plan places within the activity where you can reflect on your own work, for example, in the same context as when you assess the participants' learning. You can also reflect in collaboration with the participants.

Set objectives for your inclusive media education activities and measure their achievement. For example, record how many people in your workplace have participated in equality training.

Consider the responsibility of the educator in media education activities. Mirror the guiding documents and, for example, the gender and norms approach. The actions and example of the media educator have an impact on promoting equal media literacy. As a media educator, you need to be open to encounter and debate different perspectives.

Reflect on the material you produce and consider whether it reflects the values of your work. Check whether the old material is up to date. As a producer and communicator of material, you should reflect on your actions as a selector of imagery and themes and as a promoter of perspectives and people.

However, reflection alone will not lead to change; change requires putting the results of reflection into practice. Media education can in itself be a means of developing your own skills and attitudes. One way of putting the results of reflection into practice and thus developing activities is to pilot new ideas.

Practical tips

- Find out about your opportunities for further education.
- Organize a media education research reading group.
- Subscribe to different media education newsletters.
- Search the library for materials to support your reflection.



3. Review your resources and plan your media education within them

Make sure you have enough resources to do the job. Sufficient resources can be influenced by both management and action plans. Where necessary, look for opportunities to increase resources. Actively lobby higher up to increase resources and keep your eyes open for project grants.

However, do not get too attached to existing resources but go ahead and experiment boldly. Remember also that working with other organizations can make it possible to work with fewer resources.

Producing media education material that promotes equality does not necessarily even require large resources. Production can usually be proportioned and prioritized according to existing possibilities. You can adapt and recycle ready-made material for different purposes and for use with different audiences.

Moreover, media education does not always require digital equipment or online access but can be delivered using traditional media. If digital equipment is needed but not available, use loan or shared equipment. You can also be creative and make a wide range of media yourself.

Note that media education does not necessarily have to be a stand-alone activity—you can try to integrate it with other activities and different themes. Equally, equality-building communication does not have to be separate from other communication. Equality communication tends to reach a wide range of people.

Practical tips

- Build an annual media education calendar. Its purpose is to allocate the resources needed throughout the year and to lower the threshold to take action.
- Consider cooperation between school subjects from a media education perspective. Seek to integrate media education into them.
- Take advantage of the services offered by libraries. The library has magazines, books, music, films, games, and other materials that you can use on the spot or borrow to take away.
- Do media education without digital devices by exploring local newspapers.
- Find out about local opportunities to borrow digital equipment.



4. Collaborate where possible

The aim is to avoid duplication, share responsibilities, and build on each other's strengths. Through collaborative networks, the diversity and change of media culture is better taken into account.

Consider the opportunities for collaboration both within and outside your own organization. For example, you can start by looking at local service pathways. Allocate resources for collaboration.

Explore your practical options for working in partnership or collaboration with professionals from other sectors. Make your work transparent and reciprocal: discuss, share information, and reflect. Create space for co-design.

Invite external visitors to your media education activities. Make sure that visitors are aware of the specificities and competences of the target group.

It is also possible—and often wise—to produce media education materials as collaborative projects. Different organizations can use the same basic material for different purposes. In addition, make use of collaborative networks and their channels for communication to reach different target groups.

A collaborative network can include a social support network of participants. Therefore, consider opportunities for cooperation with, for example, the participants' carers and relatives. However, bear in mind that not everyone may have the same capacity to support their loved ones or to familiarize themselves with the material.

Practical tips

- Join Facebook groups that support media education and networking.
- Remember national theme weeks and days, such as Media Literacy week and Games Week.
- Organize a media literacy coffee: invite your colleagues—face-to-face or online—who are interested in the topic. Share good practices and develop new ones.
- Explore opportunities for cooperation with libraries.
- Explore opportunities for cooperation with different media.



5. Use content and materials that support equality

Clarify the key contents of media education for yourself, taking into account your target group. Consider different options for implementing media education activities and consciously choose the most appropriate ones for your situation.

Implement activities that support equality. Take into account current media phenomena that are relevant to everyday life. Use themes that are appropriate for different target groups as a starting point, such as emotional and interaction skills and sustainable development.

Use diverse, high-quality material that supports and promotes equality and is accessible, motivating, and up-to-date. Make use of a variety of media and ensure that the material is appropriate for your target audience. The material you use is your business card to the outside world. Sometimes a consistent format for the participants' outputs (e.g., a photograph or a cartoon) creates a basis for discussion, even on challenging topics.

Mirror your activities and materials with the instructional principles. Make the target group aware of the content available through communication.

Practical tip

List all the national and international laws, policies, guidelines and plans that are binding or guiding your activities.



6. Implement media education in a participatory and context-oriented manner

When planning media education, take into account the diversity of the participants. Treat them as individuals and as equals. Take a gender- and norm-aware approach as a starting point.

Get to know the target group and the participants in advance. Plan activities according to the needs of the participants and their level of competence. Motivate the participants in a way that suits them. Build bridges between institutional space and leisure time. Draw practical lessons from the participants' everyday lives and media culture.

It may sometimes be necessary to use tools and services that are already familiar to the participants, especially if the activity is of short duration. However, media education activities can also aim to broaden the participants' knowledge of tools and services. In this case, it is good to challenge the familiar and safe and to explore new possibilities.

The same applies to taking into account the different cultures in the home. It is good to be aware of the starting points offered by the home, but it is not worth giving too much weight to this if the aim is to learn and take on new things.

Produce and use quality material that is appropriate and interesting for the target group. Take into account the diversity of people in the material, both in the tasks and in the illustrations. Refine the material with examples tailored to the target group. Avoid under- and over-estimating the participants when designing and selecting material.

When communicating, pay attention to the language you use. Include a wide range of people in your communication. Choose appropriate communication methods and channels, taking into account the target audience. Unless your communication is specifically aimed at reaching a particular target group, emphasize equality rather than specific groups.

Practical tips

- Look at research, literature or other material on different target groups.
- Identify the wishes and needs of participants through discussion, a survey or a dream map, and use this to provide targeted media education content.
- Use current examples such as news or social media in your media education practices.



7. Increase participation in all phases of the operation

Make media education reciprocal. Actively lower the threshold for participation. Strengthen the participants' experience of agency. Consider the possibility of participating anonymously (e.g. because of the sensitivity of the activity or topic).

The participants have a wealth of knowledge that should be drawn on in the design of the activity. Ask the participants what they want and what ideas they have. Make sure that all participants have an equal voice and that everyone's perspective is taken into account. Use activities that encourage collaborative work and peer learning.

Work with the participants to plan the topics and objectives of the material. Develop material that aims to promote participation. Draw on the skills and knowledge of experts by experience to develop media education activities and materials and to design content.

You can also involve the target group in the communication and its design. Create a space for discussion and engage in it yourself.

Collect feedback from participants in different ways. Develop activities, materials, and communication on the basis of feedback.

In addition, consider the possibilities for participants to influence not only practical activities but also the structures of the activities, for example, recruitment.

Practical tips

Finland has

- Voice of the Young Editorial Board service. In the service young people make newspaper articles, TV stories and blog posts for Finland's largest media organs and stimulate social discussion in social media.
- SeniorSurf, which strengthens the digital participation of senior citizens. It supports organizations to coordinate and develop peer-to-peer digital support, and encourages seniors to learn digital skills and to find support.

Are there similar participatory activities in your country?



8. Take care of accessibility

Try to arrange a time and place that is easily accessible to the participants. Make sure that all participants can get there and that the space is accessible. Where appropriate, use learning aids to support the activity to ensure accessibility.

Use a variety of visualization tools to build common understanding. Think about how you can illustrate your speech, for example, with concrete examples. Make use of interpreting and dictionary services where necessary.

Ensure that media education materials are accessible and barrier-free. Explain the key concepts in the material. Where possible, provide material in different languages, both text and audio versions. Remember to subtitle the videos. Plain language or clear, simple, and concise language and text layout will help to make the material easier to understand. Make use of material that appeals to the different senses. Invest in the illustration of the materials.

Communicate in a clear and structured way that takes the participants into account. Make bold and varied use of different ways and channels of communication to promote accessibility. Communicate through both digital and traditional media.

Add alternative texts to images to illustrate their content. Choose the language of communication for accessibility. Remember to use consistent language: use the same terms systematically and choose images according to the text.

Also consider social accessibility. For example, consider how to promote inclusion when a person is excluded because of discrimination or fear of discrimination. If necessary, organize specific groups for minorities.

Practical tips

- Pay attention to the directive (EU) on the accessibility of the website and mobile applications of the public sector bodies.
- Translate your most popular material into plain language.



9. Create a safer place to learn and act

Review with the participants the principles and practices related to safe space. Take a gender- and norm-conscious approach as a starting point.

Make safe-space principles visible in media education materials. Ensure that the content of the material is in line with the safe space principles. Use language and imagery appropriate to the target group, but be truthful—do not sugar-coat it.

When using films, TV programs, games, or social media content in media education activities, pay attention to age limits. Discuss with the participants the external risk factors associated with different media platforms, such as online risks.

Use non-discriminatory language in your speech, material, and other communication. Use your communication to raise awareness of the principles of safe space. Build a safer media culture through your own communication. Moderate the debate in different communication channels and forums in an open way.

Practical tips

- Familiarize yourself with the principles of safe space and adapt them to your own practice. Find examples on the websites of different organizations.
- Use the information on age limits provided by your national authority. [Pan European Game Information \(PEGI\) provides age classification for video games in most European countries.](#)



10. Be ready to adjust according to the situation

Design your inclusive media education practices to be flexible from the outset. Structure the activity in such a way that people can participate in different ways and at different stages. For example, if someone cannot or does not want to participate on the spot, they can participate remotely, or if someone does not want to appear in public, they can contribute at the scripting stage.

Make use of a variety of pedagogical approaches and media. Be bold and creative in seizing situations that arise in action.

Make the material easily accessible and adaptable as needed. Plan the tasks in a way that allows for more clarity and can be pruned—depending on the situation. Be prepared to respond through communication and interact with people.

Practical tip

Finland has [Epic Light Program, ruined by the Sosped Foundation](#). The program aims to strengthen the media skills and the voice of young adults that face challenges in their lives. All participants are interested in learning more about media and media content creation and share a hope to study and get employed within that field.

Is there something similar in your country?

Reflective questions

- Why do you think it is important to promote inclusivity?
- What strengths do you identify in your workplace for promoting inclusivity?
- Which people in your workplace can contribute to promoting inclusivity?
- Which of the instructional principles do you think is the most important?
- Which of the instructional principles have already been considered in your work?
- What do you think would be the easiest way to get started in developing inclusive actions?

Glossary

What are media literacy and media education? [See the terminology on the Media Literacy in Finland website.](#)

What is meant by inclusive media literacy? It considers equality and accessibility in media culture, media education among different popular groups, and their inclusion in media literacy. [Read more about inclusiveness on the study report of KAVI and Cupore \(2023\).](#)

Additional material

A video series has been published to support the implementation of instructional principles. [You can find the English videos on the YouTube channel called Asiaa Mediakasvatuksesta.](#) Short videos introduce all the instructional principles and provide case examples and good practices for utilizing the principles.

All the materials published in the project can be found at www.icmeproject.eu.

Annex: Instructional principles in a table form

The table summarizes the same information as the actual material, except for practical tips. The content in table format can help you to understand the instructional principles from different perspectives.

Instructional principle	What does it mean?		
	In media education practices	In material production	In communications
1. Find out the guidelines and plan activities accordingly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Find out which of these documents are binding on you and which guide your actions. - Try to develop the plans in a way that takes better account of equality. - Set both long- and short-term objectives for your media education activities, based on your guidelines and plans to build equality in the long term. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make the relationship between the media education material you produce and use, and the policies that guide it, visible so that the user is aware of the link. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take into account your organization's communication plan. - Seek to develop the communication plan in a way that supports equality, based on lessons learned. - Plan your communication accordingly.
2. Reflect on your own activities, attitudes, competences, and development needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflective work is a cyclical process, repeated alongside other work. - Plan places within the activity where you can reflect on your own work. - You can also reflect in collaboration with the participants. - Set objectives for your activities and measure their achievement. - Consider the responsibility of the educator in media education activities. Mirror the guiding documents and, the gender and norms approach. - The actions and example of the media educator have an impact on promoting equal media literacy. - As a media educator, you need to be open to different perspectives. - Change requires putting the results of reflection into practice. - Media education can in itself be a means of developing your own skills and attitudes. - Pilot new ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflect on the material you produce: consider whether it reflects the values of your work, check whether the old material is up to date. - You should reflect on your actions as a selector of imagery and themes and as a promoter of perspectives and people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You should reflect on your actions as a selector of imagery and themes and as a promoter of perspectives and people.

Instructional principle	What does it mean?		
	In media education practices	In material production	In communications
3. Review your resources and plan your media education within them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make sure you have enough resources by both management and action plans. - Look for opportunities to increase resources. - Do not get too attached to existing resources but go ahead and experiment boldly. - Working with other organizations can make it possible to work with fewer resources. - Media education does not always require digital equipment or online access but can be delivered using traditional media. - If digital equipment is needed but not available, use loan or shared equipment, or be creative and do it yourself. - Try to integrate media education with other activities and different themes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Producing media education material that promotes equality does not necessarily even require large resources. Production can usually be proportioned and prioritized according to existing possibilities. - You can adapt and recycle ready-made material for different purposes and for use with different audiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equality-building communication does not have to be separate from other communication. It tends to reach a wide range of people.
4. Collaborate where possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The aim of collaboration is to avoid duplication, share responsibilities, and build on each other's strengths. - Through collaborative networks, the diversity and change of media culture is better taken into account. - Consider the opportunities for collaboration both within and outside your own organization. - Explore your practical options for working in partnership or collaboration with professionals from other sectors. - Make your work transparent and reciprocal: discuss, share information, and reflect. - Create space for co-design. - Invite external visitors - consider opportunities for cooperation with, for example, the participants' carers and relatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Produce materials as collaborative projects. - Different organizations can use the same basic material for different purposes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make use of collaborative networks and their channels for communication to reach different target groups.

Instructional principle	What does it mean?		
	In media education practices	In material production	In communications
5. Use content and materials that support equality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarify the key contents of media education for yourself, taking into account your target group. - Consider different options for implementing media education activities and consciously choose the most appropriate ones for your situation. - Implement activities that support equality. - Take into account current media phenomena that are relevant to everyday life. - Use themes that are appropriate for different target groups as a starting point, such as emotional and interaction skills and sustainable development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use diverse, high-quality material that supports and promotes equality and is accessible, motivating, and up-to-date. - Make use of a variety of media. - Ensure that the material is appropriate for your target audience. - The material you use is your business card to the outside world. - Sometimes a consistent format for the participants' outputs (e.g., a photograph or a cartoon) creates a basis for discussion, even on challenging topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make the target group aware of the content available through communication.
6. Implement media education in a participatory and context-oriented manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take into account the diversity of the participants. - Treat them as individuals and as equals. - Take a gender- and norm-aware approach as a starting point. - Get to know the target group and the participants in advance. - Plan activities according to the needs of the participants and their level of competence. - Motivate the participants in a way that suits them. - Build bridges between institutional space and leisure time. Draw practical lessons from the participants' everyday lives and media culture. - Use tools and services familiar to the target group unless this conflicts with the learning objectives. - Take into account the different cultures at home, but also dare to challenge them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Produce and use quality material that is appropriate and interesting for the target group. - Take into account the diversity of people in the material, both in the tasks and in the illustrations. - Refine the material with examples tailored to the target group. - Avoid under- and over-estimating the participants when designing and selecting material. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When communicating, pay attention to the language you use. - Include a wide range of people in your communication. - Choose appropriate communication methods and channels, taking into account the target audience. - Unless your communication is specifically aimed at reaching a particular target group, emphasize equality rather than specific groups.

Instructional principle	What does it mean?		
	In media education practices	In material production	In communications
7. Increase participation in all phases of the operation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make media education reciprocal. - Actively lower the threshold for participation. - Strengthen the participants' experience of agency. - Consider the possibility of participating anonymously (e.g. because of the sensitivity of the activity or topic). - The participants have a wealth of knowledge that should be drawn on in the design of the activity. Ask the participants what they want and what ideas they have. - Make sure that all participants have an equal voice and that everyone's perspective is taken into account. - Use activities that encourage collaborative work and peer learning. - Consider the possibilities for participants to influence not only practical activities but also the structures of the activities. - Draw on the skills and knowledge of experts by experience to develop media education practices. - Collect feedback from participants and develop activities based on that. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with the participants to plan the topics and objectives of the material. - Develop material that aims to promote participation. - Draw on the skills and knowledge of experts by experience to develop media education practices materials and to design content. - Collect feedback from participants and develop material based on that. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You can also involve the target group in the communication and its design. - Create a space for discussion and engage in it yourself. - Collect feedback from participants and develop communications based on that.

Instructional principle	What does it mean?		
	In media education practices	In material production	In communications
8. Take care of accessibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try to arrange a time and place that is easily accessible to the participants. - Make sure that all participants can get there and that the space is accessible. - Where appropriate, use learning aids to support the activity to ensure accessibility. - Use a variety of visualization tools to build common understanding. - Think about how you can illustrate your speech, for example, with concrete examples. - Make use of interpreting and dictionary services where necessary. - Also consider social accessibility. For example, consider how to promote inclusion when a person is excluded because of discrimination or fear of discrimination. If necessary, organize specific groups for minorities. - If necessary, organize specific groups for minorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that media education materials are accessible and barrier-free. - Explain the key concepts in the material. - Where possible, provide material in different languages, both text and audio versions. Remember to subtitle the videos. - Plain language or clear, simple, and concise language and text layout will help to make the material easier to understand. - Make use of material that appeals to the different senses. - Invest in the illustration of the materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communicate in a clear and structured way that takes the participants into account. - Make bold and varied use of different ways and channels of communication to promote accessibility. Communicate through both digital and traditional media. - Add alternative texts to images to illustrate their content. - Choose the language of communication for accessibility. - Remember to use consistent language: use the same terms systematically and choose images according to the text.
9. Create a safer place to learn and act.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review with the participants the principles and practices related to safe space. - Take a gender- and norm-conscious approach as a starting point. - Pay attention to age limits. - Discuss with the participants the external risk factors associated with different media platforms, such as online risks. - Use non-discriminatory language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make safe-space principles visible in materials. - Ensure that the content of the material is in line with the safe space principles. - Use language and imagery appropriate to the target group, but be truthful—do not sugar-coat it. - Use non-discriminatory language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use non-discriminatory language. - Use your communication to raise awareness of the principles of safe spaces. - Build a safer media culture through your own communication. - Moderate the debate in different communication channels and forums in an open way.

Instructional principle	What does it mean?		
	In media education practices	In material production	In communications
10. Be ready to adjust according to the situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design your practices to be flexible from the outset. - Structure the activity in such a way that people can participate in different ways and at different stages. - Make use of a variety of pedagogical approaches and media. - Be bold and creative in seizing situations that arise in action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make the material easily accessible and adaptable as needed. - Plan the tasks in a way that allows for more clarity and can be pruned—depending on the situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be prepared to respond through communication and interact with people.