

Media Literacy Guide

Learning and teaching media literacy
in regions of tension



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A Word from the Author

What is the purpose of this guide? Who is it aimed at? This guide is intended to strengthen media literacy skills in regions of tension. The guide serves as an information resource and a practical tool for anyone with a desire to teach media literacy – whether you are a youth worker, teacher, student or simply a community member interested in media literacy.

At the end of this guide, Appendix contains tips and exercises related to teaching media literacy. They can be used as tools and inspiration.

This guide has been created as part of the Inclusive Media Literacy Education in Palestine (2023-26) project. I would like to express my warmest gratitude to Moussa Rabadi, Maysoun Ramadan, Tamara Abu Laban, Hisham Mellhemallaham, Ossayd Alamarneh at the Bethlehem University in Palestine who have worked with us on this project. I also want to express my gratitude to all our brave, creative students of journalism at Bethlehem University who attended to our Media Literacy courses and conducted valuable media literacy projects in the communities in Palestine.

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Helsinki, Finland, 5 October 2026

Kaisu John



Foreword

Media literacy is a fundamental civic and survival skill of our time. It is not merely the ability to distinguish fact from falsehood, but, above all, the capacity to understand a world in which information, opinions, power and influence interact in increasingly complex ways. Media literacy becomes particularly important in regions characterised by tension – whether political, social, economic or cultural.

Regions affected by tension are no longer defined solely by physical or geographical borders. They may also exist as digital spaces where divisions intensify, polarisation flourishes, trust erodes and misinformation spreads rapidly. In such environments, emotions may drive actions more quickly than careful, considered decision-making. At the same time, people's sense of security and trust in democracy may be shaken. What, and whom, can one ultimately trust?

In these contexts, media literacy is not only a survival skill but also a prerequisite for societal stability and peace. Sustainable peace is built on knowledge, understanding and people's participation. It is essential to recognise that media literacy forms a core component of the foundations of peace. Without it, navigating today's world becomes increasingly difficult.

When individuals and communities are equipped with media literacy skills, their ability to act as active citizens, defend their rights, and build a more sustainable future is strengthened. At the same time, they are given a voice with which to tell their own stories. This is especially important for girls and women, who often face barriers in access to education, information and public participation, yet remain key agents of change within their communities.

Teaching media literacy in tension-affected contexts requires sensitivity, empathy, an understanding of the local context and sustained effort. It is not a simple task, but its importance in building peace is undeniable. This guide offers valuable perspectives and practical tools to support the teaching of media literacy in such environments. I hope it encourages teachers, educators and community builders to strengthen critical thinking, empathy and dialogue – skills we need now more than ever.

Wishing you joy in learning and teaching media literacy!

Helsinki, Finland 5 October 2026

President Tarja Halonen

2 Introduction: Media literacy – definition and importance in today's world

We live in a world where we encounter an enormous number of messages and information every day: news, advertisements, videos, social media posts, and content generated by artificial intelligence. It is important to also be aware of the challenges that artificial intelligence (AI) brings to today's world. AI-generated deepfake images and videos spread rapidly, and they look so realistic that it is almost impossible to distinguish truth from false information. At times, we may feel powerless, or even hopeless, in the face of all the information we encounter: how can we determine which of it is reliable?

The answer is that we can use media literacy as our tool to navigate the jungle of information. Media literacy is a survival skill. It is a compass that helps us navigate a world filled with information in its many different forms. Media literacy is critical thinking. It is the ability to stop, breathe, ask questions and think before believing, sharing or responding to the information we encounter.

Media literacy includes skills such as:

- **Critical thinking:** The ability to evaluate, pause, and reflect on information before believing it.
- **Considering different viewpoints:** The ability to understand that the same thing can be seen from many different perspectives. This can help with understanding and develop the ability to empathise.
- **Distinguishing facts from opinions:** The ability to look at media content and distinguish when something is a fact, which can be verified, and when it is a person's opinion, in other words, a thought, feeling, or interpretation about something.
- **Recognising emotions** (one's own and of others): The ability to notice how one's own or others' emotions influence how information is reacted to and interpreted.
- **Evaluating sources:** The ability to identify which sources are reliable and which may be biased or inaccurate.
- **Understanding how the media works:** The ability to understand how media works, what effects it can have, and how content may be constructed to influence the audience.
- **Reflecting on one's own actions:** The ability to reflect on one's own reactions and actions as a media consumer and content creator. How ethical and responsible am I as a user and producer of media?

Media literacy always involves two sides: **media consumption** and **media production**.

Critical consumption of media simply means the ability to understand, analyse, and evaluate media before believing it. This includes, for example, questioning the reliability of information, distinguishing facts from opinions, and recognising methods of manipulation or misinformation. **Responsible consuming of media** means that a person considers how they react to information or share information, ensuring that they do not spread misleading content. It also means, for example, considering the impact of a media text on others and understanding that one's own sharing can influence how a message spreads. Responsible consuming also involves using sources correctly and respecting copyright.

Critical media production means, for example, that a person considers what and how they publish: is the content true and verified? It also means reflecting on the impact of their message and who the intended audience is. It involves recognising and avoiding misleading information, exaggeration or manipulation in one's own content. **Responsible media production**, on the other hand, means that in one's content, whether it is a social media post, a self-made video, or a podcast, respects sources and copyrights and does not spread harmful or otherwise offensive material. Responsible production also involves considering ethical and social impacts, such as how the content affects other people or communities.

It is important to understand that media literacy is challenging because it requires critical thinking which is **cognitively demanding**. This cognitively demanding aspect means that media literacy requires deep thinking, concentration and the ability to examine an issue from multiple perspectives. It is not always easy – for anyone.

For this reason, media literacy is a skill that must be practiced continuously. It is also important to recognise that we are never fully “finished” or complete in mastering this skill. The media environment is constantly changing, and therefore one must keep learning all the time. **Practicing media literacy is like building muscles**, and as we exercise this skill – strengthening our media-literacy muscles – we become increasingly stronger and we can survive and navigate the jungle of information more effectively.

Media literacy is important because:

- **It protects you from manipulation:** You can recognise when someone is trying to affect your emotions (for example scare you), divide people into camps, or radicalise you.
- **It helps in conflicts and crises:** In regions of tension and during conflicts, false information spreads quickly and can cause panic or dangerous decisions – even violence.
- **It reduces unnecessary fear:** When you can evaluate sources critically, you don't react impulsively to every headline or social media post.
- **It protects your identity:** You don't let others unconsciously define your worldview and identity.
- **It supports mental health:** The ability to filter and assess the flow of information increases your sense of control: it is especially important in unstable conditions and in regions of tension.

We all play a part in shaping and building media environments through the content we create and consume. That's why media literacy skills are essential – to engage respectfully with others and take care of ourselves. For these reasons, media literacy is increasingly essential in today's world. In this fast-paced information flood, media literacy acts as counterbalance – an individual's ability to pause in the face of all this information and remain analytical and responsible.

Learning aims

**Consuming media
critically and
responsibly**

**Producing media
critically and
responsibly**

This guide provides tools for understanding, learning and teaching media literacy. A special focus has been put on the challenges arising in regions of tension. Whether you are a youth worker, a learner or a teacher, this guide offers you inspiration and practical tools.

Sources and inspiration:

FaktaBaari (2022): *Digitaalinen informaatiolukutaito. Yleistajuinen opas digitaalisen uutisvirran seuraajille.* (in Finnish)

Knuuti, Karoliina (editor) 2020: *Media Guide – Media Literacy for Adults.* Kansanvalistusseura sr.

Mediakasvatusseura: [Opas mediataitojen ja kansalaisaktiivisuuden vahvistamiseen - Mediakasvatusseura ry.](#) (in Finnish)

UNESCO: [Media and Information Literacy | UNESCO](#)

AI has been used in this chapter as a tool for planning and brainstorming.

3 Media literacy in regions of tension

3.1 Regions of tension – definition

This guide discusses learning, and the role of teaching media literacy in regions of tension. But what exactly does it mean when we talk about regions of tension? It is essential to define the concept before we delve into the challenges.

Generally, regions of tension refer to areas characterised by political, social, or military instability. In these regions, the significance of information is amplified but its reliability is compromised. This is where the importance and role of media literacy come into play. Strengthening skills of media literacy is important for identifying fake news, attempts to manipulate with information and produce media responsibly – and thus can help reduce tensions. Media educators play a vital role in this. **A media educator can also be considered a peacebuilder.**

In this guide, 'regions of tension' refers to the following areas:

- **Conflict zones:**
Refers to active war or conflict zones.
- **Fragile states:**
Regions characterised by weak governance or persistent internal unrest.
- **Polarisation:**
Regions where deep divides between population groups (for example politics, religion, ethnicity) create tensions, even in the absence of direct violence.
- **Digital tensions:**
Regions where internet access is restricted, or where the state uses the network for the surveillance and influence of its citizens.

3.2 Challenges in regions of tension: Disinformation and information security

To understand media literacy in these regions, we first need to look at the challenges in such conditions. First, lack of **information security**, **spreading of disinformation** and **propaganda** are significant challenges.

It is important to identify how different parties use the media to drive their own narratives. For example, propaganda is purposeful and systematic communication intended to shape people's opinions, attitudes or behaviour for the benefit of a particular party. It does not aim for truthful or balanced information sharing. Instead, it serves as a tool for the exercise of power. Propaganda appeals to emotions and often creates polarisation. For example, one's own group is portrayed as heroic and 'good', while the opposing side or enemy is depicted as inhuman or evil.

It is important to identify propaganda because it is a strategic tool. It can be used for example by states or political actors to shape opinions, create enemy images, influence public sentiment, affect decision-making, and increase fear or distrust.

How to identify propaganda?

If you notice these patterns, it is likely to be propaganda:

- **Appeal to emotion:** Propaganda aims to bypass logical thinking by evoking strong emotions, such as fear or anger. If a message makes you feel instantly infuriated or threatened, **stop to consider why**.
- **Black-and-white thinking:** Complex issues are presented as simple "us versus them" scenarios. Only two options are given: right and wrong, or good and evil.
- **Labelling:** Instead of addressing the opponent's arguments, the goal is to discredit them using offensive terms or stereotypes.
- **Appeal to authority:** The message references prominent leaders, religion or science (even without proper justification) to give the claims more weight and credibility.
- **The "bandwagon" effect:** The message creates the impression that "everyone else" already agrees. The goal is to persuade you to join the majority so that you don't feel left out.

Propaganda can be particularly effective in regions of tension because independent media is often silenced. People are living in unstable conditions and are uncertain. They experience ambiguity and uncertainty regarding for example security, the reliability of information, the economy, and the broader social situation. This leads to people searching for explanations for what has led to such a difficult situation. Also, **digital bubbles (algorithms)** reinforce messages from one's own side. Propaganda and fact-checking tools will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

In addition to propaganda, **influence operations** are challenges in regions of tension. This means that various outside actors seek to further destabilise the situation with fake news. **Information blackouts** are also possible in regions of tension. This means a major exercise of power, such as the intentional cutting of internet or communication links at critical moments.

Algorithms also play a major role when discussing media literacy in regions of tension. It is very important for people to be aware of the impact of algorithms. Algorithms may provide users only with content that supports their own worldview, which further deepens tensions. This is known as the **echo chamber effect**.

Hate speech is a particularly dangerous challenge in regions of tension, as it may act as a catalyst for physical violence. It is not just offensive speech, but a strategic tool used to undermine social stability.

Artificial intelligence (AI) may be a major challenge in regions of tension because it automates and scales the creation of disinformation. AI can be used to create realistic videos, images, or audio recordings (deepfakes). In a tense situation, people may lack the time or tools to verify the authenticity of a video before it has already triggered unrest. AI bots can also be used to create thousands of credible social media accounts that spread the same message simultaneously. This creates a false impression of the “will of the people” or massive support for a cause (above mentioned **bandwagon effect**). Furthermore, AI can analyse vast amounts of data to identify the points of fears and people’s pain. This allows propaganda to be tailored to each user personally, making it much more effective and harder to detect (**micro-targeting**). Tools for identifying deepfakes are covered in Chapter 4.

It is also important to recognise the impact of **language barriers and content moderation**. AI-based content moderation may not understand local dialects or context, which can result in hate speech being left online or innocent communication being blocked.

It is also important to consider the challenge of **citizen safety**. For instance, journalists working in regions of tension may face various threats, such as risks to their physical safety, intimidation and accusations of ‘anti-state activities’. On the other side, how can we protect interviewees and ordinary citizens who share information in dangerous environments? It is crucial to consider these issues in regions of tension.

These various challenges in regions of tension also lead to ethical reflections. Maintaining **neutrality** can be difficult in such an environment. Can media educator or a journalist, for example, remain neutral amid tensions? Furthermore, how should media literacy be taught if news content is frightening or traumatising for the students? We’ll delve more deeply into these topics in Chapter 4.

3.3 Importance of media literacy in regions of tension

To tackle all these challenges, media literacy is especially important in regions of tension. Media literacy serves **conflict prevention and de-escalation**. For example, in regions of tension, hate speech and “us versus them” thinking spread rapidly on social media. Media literacy helps people to identify hate speech, provocations and avoid emotional reactions that could lead to physical violence.

Media literacy **protects us from manipulation and disinformation**. In conflict situations, information is weaponised. Propaganda and distorted information increase distrust, and in that way, destabilise the balance of society. Media literacy gives people the ability to protect themselves from fake news and manipulation that is designed to destabilise local peace.

Media literacy is also about **supporting empathy and a plurality of voices**. In regions of tension, echo chambers and various forms of confrontation (us-versus-them thinking) grow stronger. Media literacy helps people understand how, for example, algorithms affect polarisation and influence human behaviour and thought. It encourages seeing the ‘other side’ as human beings rather than as enemies. Media literacy increases empathy, and empathy is a necessary tool in regions of tension. Empathy is needed in regions of tension prevent conflicts, reduce polarisation and foster dialogue, among other things.

In regions of tension, one’s digital footprint can be a significant risk. But media literacy is a tool for this as well, as it teaches **digital safety**: How can one communicate safely and ethically, protect one’s privacy, and avoid falling victim to surveillance or cyberbullying?

In a tense context like this, one may often experience a sense of helplessness or hopelessness. In addition to the aforementioned, media literacy is about **fostering hope and agency** as a citizen. It empowers people to use their own voices, tell their own stories and participate in building a more peaceful society and future. Through media literacy, people can learn to communicate ethically and responsibly and take an active role in their own community. Media literacy emphasises agency, the idea that people are not merely victims of circumstances, but rather active communicators.

It is crucial to recognise that the lack of free media is a significant problem in regions of tension. Mobile journalism and grass-roots production are one answer to this. For example, mobile journalism and participatory content production can serve as empowerment tools for youth in fragile contexts. All in all, media literacy also serves as a tool for agency and empowerment in many ways. Media literacy as a tool for **empowerment** will be discussed further in Chapter 4 and 5.

Finally, **media literacy is important because it can be a tool for fostering peace in regions of tension**. It is not only a question of identifying disinformation or checking facts, but also of protecting human dignity and human rights, mitigating tensions, preventing the escalation of violence and building psychological resilience.

The many roles of a media educator in regions of tension

A critical thinker who also teaches their students to grow into critical thinkers

A defender of human rights

A mitigator of tensions

An advocate for motivation, hope and education

An encourager who inspires active participation within one's own community and society

A supporter and encourager who inspires students to use their own voice (emphasising that students' thoughts, opinions, and emotions are valuable)

Expert Commentary: Why is it important to be media literate in Ukraine today?

Today, a media-literate person is someone who understands how diverse media systems function, can critically evaluate information and avoids spreading misinformation. Such a person behaves safely online and maintains psychological resilience in the face of information pressure. In the context of contemporary Ukraine, media literacy also involves the ability to resist disinformation, avoid panic and make informed decisions during war and periods of social change.

Ukraine has made significant progress in media literacy, particularly since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion. Media literacy has become a strategic public issue, directly linked to resilience in times of war. It is regarded not only as an educational priority, but also as a matter of democratic security and national resilience. Civil society has played a key role in transforming media literacy into an increasingly national priority. In recent years, Ukraine has implemented the Media Literacy Strategy 2026 at the state level. Media literacy is gradually being integrated into the education system through civic education, history, languages, digital literacy programmes and teacher training. However, it has not yet become a fully standardised compulsory subject in all schools and universities.

Despite this progress, a range of challenges remain, including limited large-scale programmes for adults and older students, uneven regional access, weak local educational infrastructure, and the need to address emerging risks such as AI-generated disinformation, deepfakes, and manipulative content on social media and messaging platforms. The next step is to move from isolated initiatives and campaigns towards a comprehensive lifelong learning system accessible to all citizens, recognising media literacy as a key competence related to work, safety, health information, and everyday decision-making.

In Ukraine today, media literacy focuses on practical resilience, everyday safety and informed participation – including understanding public communication, recognising political manipulation, and engaging responsibly online. Key priorities for adults include awareness of AI-related risks, social media literacy, fraud detection, and emotional resilience. There is also a need to tailor programmes to different target groups, including older people, internally displaced persons (IDPs), veterans, rural communities, unemployed adults, and parents.

Oleg Smirnov

Director, Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV), Ukraine.



Sources and inspiration:

For this chapter, the following experts were interviewed: journalist-teachers Tamara Abu Laban and Hisham Abu Mellhemallaham from the Bethlehem University in Palestine.

FaktaBaari (2022): *Digitaalinen informaatiolukutaito. Yleistajuinen opas digitaalisen uutisvirran seuraajille.* (in Finnish)

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UNESCO: [Media and Information Literacy | UNESCO](#)

AI has been used in this chapter as a tool for planning and brainstorming.

4 Learning and teaching media literacy in regions of tension

4.1 Learning aims and topics

A single image can travel across the world in seconds through media. At best, an image can spark important conversations about meaningful issues. However, if an image is misleading and intended, for example, to offend a particular group of people, the consequences can be enormous – and may even lead to violence.

Media literacy becomes particularly important in situations like these. Media can be used with either good or bad intentions. It is the responsibility of everyone to consume and produce media responsibly and ethically. Moreover, media educators teach to use it for good – and to help students recognise when the intention is positive and when it is not.

The aim of this chapter is to define what all media consumers and producers should learn about media literacy and why these skills are particularly important in regions of tension. When it comes to media educators, these learning aims guide the educator's planning process and serve as practical support when teaching media literacy in regions of tension.

All in all, **critical thinking** constitutes the fundamental basis for media literacy. It is most important to support one's critical thinking skills. In the work of media educators, it is important for them to support students' critical thinking. The learning aims (mentioned in chapter 2) remain the same regardless of the topic:

- **Consuming** media critically and responsibly
- **Producing** media critically and responsibly

Media literacy is a broad concept, covering many topics. This guide focuses on the topics particularly relevant to regions of tension:

- **Emotional regulation**
- **Identifying disinformation**
- **Ethics and responsibility**
- **Active citizenship and citizen journalism**
- **Human rights**
- **Digital safety**

Let's take a closer look at the topics mentioned above.

4.1.1 Emotional regulation

In addition to critical thinking skills, **emotional regulation** is a significant aim, especially in regions of tension. But what does emotional regulation mean in the context of media literacy?

Emotional regulation refers to the ability to identify, understand and manage one's own emotions and their intensity. This is critical in media literacy, as disinformation is often designed to engage our emotions. It is also important for all, including media educators, to remember that no one is immune to it. For example, if person feels something immediately and becomes intensely angry at something they read or see in the media, their ability to think critically often shuts down.

This phenomenon and many others in media literacy can be explained through psychology. A part of the brain called the amygdala reacts to fear or anger in a fraction of a second. It bypasses the brain's logical part (critical thinking), the prefrontal cortex. This phenomenon is called **amygdala hijack**.

Psychological studies have shown that the human brain naturally seeks out information that supports what we already believe. This is called **confirmation bias**. For example, imagine a resident who believes that people from a neighbouring district are aggressive and badly behaved. What happens when the resident sees videos and social media posts showing the other residents shouting, throwing objects around and being very aggressive? He or she doesn't check the origin of the video, the context or the date. Instead, their brain signals to them: This proves I was right! We can all fall for fake news if it supports our worldview – no one is immune to this.

Even if no one is immune to instant emotional reactions, the good news is that when people understand **how** they are being manipulated, they become more resistant to manipulation. The more media literacy skills are strengthened, the more aware people become of the methods used to influence or manipulate us.

When teaching media literacy in regions of tension, it is important to explain how emotions are intentionally influenced. Emotions play a major role in these environments, as disinformation is specifically designed to hijack them. By understanding the psychological mechanisms behind reactions, people can move from impulsive responses to informed analysis. This path leads the way to more sustainable peace and democracy in regions of tension – even though it is a long-term aim.

When people understand the purpose of emotional regulation in media literacy, they also learn to feel empathy towards others. It is equally important to understand the perspectives of others and to recognise one's own cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias.

4.1.2 Identifying disinformation

How do we know what to trust? The very important goal of enhancing media literacy skills in regions of tension is to learn **how to identify**. It is important for people in regions of tension to learn how to identify intentional disinformation, misinformation, malinformation, hate speech and polarising language.

Why is it so important to learn tools for recognising false information in regions of tension? Simply put, false information does not help promote a stable society and democracy. Correct information, on the other hand, helps in promoting stability in society and democracy. Accurate information benefits society: it enables better decision-making, for example, on political issues such as voting or health-related choices. Spreading lies, however, can increase hate speech and polarisation, provoke violence and conflicts, undermine trust in the media and weaken democracy. At worst, it can be life-threatening. These issues are especially important when recognising false information and not spreading it.

So, how can we identify harmful disinformation? **Again, emotions and emotional regulation play a significant part.** Disinformation spreaders aim to influence emotions, as this makes it harder to think rationally. When people understand these psychological mechanisms and recognise the role of emotions in this, people have better tools to identify intentional disinformation and polarising language. **So, the first advice when encountering information that evokes strong emotions, such as anger or fear, is that it is very important to stop and breathe before doing anything.** Recovering from the emotional upset caused by a social media post can take up to 30 minutes. So, it is very important just to stop and take some time to calm down.

Also, it is very important to understand the difference between the terms mal-, dis- and misinformation. Once people understand which kinds of lies, rumours and errors can spread online in the first place, it becomes easier for people to recognise them. **Malinformation refers to harmful information, which can also be described as gossip.** It is information that is factually accurate but is shared with the intention of smearing, embarrassing, or otherwise causing harm to someone. An example would be photos or videos shared in social media with the aim of humiliating someone, such as a politician or other public figure.

Disinformation refers to information that has been deliberately distorted – in other words, a lie. It involves intentionally twisting the truth and sharing that false information with others: in such cases, it is considered disinformation. **Misinformation is incorrect information (an error) and differs from disinformation in that it can also be unintentional and is not always harmful.** For example, if an article contains an error because the journalist has not properly checked the facts, it is a case of misinformation.

Checklist: What to do when encountering information that evokes strong emotions

- First, **stop!** Stop and breathe before sharing the information with others. Remember that disinformation spreaders aim to influence emotions, as this makes it harder to think rationally.
- Ask these 3 questions, search and try to answer them:
 1. Who made the claim?
 2. What evidence has been presented to support it?
 3. What do other sources have to say about it?

False information will usually reveal itself as such when these questions are answered.

In addition to various fact-checking tools (for example, such tools can be used to verify whether an image circulating on social media is genuine or not), **these three questions are extremely important tools:**

1. Who made the claim?
2. What evidence has been presented to support it?
3. What do other sources have to say about it?

So, before believing information which evokes strong emotions, one should ask these questions, search information and try to answer them. If it seems that the information may not be true, it is best not to trust it. False information will usually reveal itself as such when these questions are answered.

A major challenge in recognising disinformation is caused by AI. The volume and speed at which content is produced using AI is enormous. Deepfakes are common.

What kinds of tools are available for detecting AI-generated media content? Or is it even possible to identify it?

AI is constantly evolving, and tools for detecting it are also developing and improving at a very rapid pace. At present, it is extremely difficult – almost impossible – to determine whether content has been created by AI or not. Images may contain certain inconsistencies or elements that contradict the laws of physics, but spotting these usually requires a kind of detective work, meaning deeper investigation and careful analysis. More about tools for detecting AI is provided in the exercise included in this chapter.

4.1.3 Ethics and responsibility

What are the values that guide media literacy, both as a consumer and as a producer of media? In addition to critical thinking, the answer is: ethics and responsibility. They are also important elements of media literacy and often difficult to embrace in regions of tension. Especially in sensitive, fragile situations, it is essential to remain as ethical and responsible as possible in one's own choices when producing or consuming media content. What does this mean in practice? What are these choices?

Concrete actions and choices related to ethics and responsibility in media literacy mean always **striving for truthfulness**. For example, before publishing or sharing any media content, it is important to verify the sources. Is this information true? Or am I spreading rumours or unverified claims? Ethics and responsibility also involve **considering different perspectives and avoiding one-sidedness**. It is always worth asking yourself: am I taking as many viewpoints as possible into account, or is someone's perspective missing?

Ethics and responsibility in media literacy also mean **making the conscious choice to respect every individual and everyone's privacy**. No one's sensitive or private information, images, or videos should be shared without permission. It is useful to reflect on these choices from a personal perspective: would I want this to happen to me? In other words, do not do anything in media that you would not want to have done to yourself.

A key aspect of ethics is **reflecting on the possible consequences of your actions and aiming to minimise harm**. Content that may incite hatred, fear, violence or division should not be shared. It is important to assess in advance what effects or consequences content may have on individuals and communities. It is essential to understand that every like, share and comment has an impact. If one is unsure about the content, it is better not to engage with it. Again: it is good to stop and breathe.

How can AI be used ethically and responsibly?

Three points to be remembered when using AI:

- **Be transparent and open about the use of AI:** clearly indicate if AI has been used in any output, such as an image or a piece of text.
- **Remember that personal data must not be entered into AI systems:** do not input sensitive information such as personal details, data related to health issues, or identification numbers.
- **AI should not be used for decision-making:** decision-making power must remain with humans.

Constructive, respectful interaction in media, especially in sensitive or tense contexts, is extremely important. It is also important to avoid provoking or escalating situations. Before participating in online discussions, one should consider whether contribution can be constructive. If constructive dialogue is not possible, it is better not to engage in the discussion. **One cannot control others' behaviour, but everyone is responsible for their own actions.** Sometimes, the most responsible active choice is simply not to participate.

Safety must also be remembered in regions of tension. It is always important to protect not only personal information but also, for example, location data. These topics are covered further in the chapter on Digital Safety.

Checklist: What should be considered, particularly in regions of tension, in terms of ethics and responsibility when publishing media content?

Check these four points before sharing or publishing media content:

- **Avoid content that escalates divisions or incites hatred:** Avoid content that blames, stereotypes or dehumanises people or groups. Do not share emotionally charged, provocative or misleading material that may fuel anger or other strong feelings or deepen “us versus them” thinking. Instead, aim to share evidence-based content that promotes understanding.
- **Remember to protect your own safety and the safety of those close to you:** Do not share personal information online – either your own or that of others – such as addresses or location data.
- **Strive to identify disinformation:** When people in regions of tension are better able to identify different forms of influence and disinformation, tensions and divisions can begin to ease. If you are not sure whether the content is true or not, don't share it.
- **Consider the consequences:** Could the information I share have positive or negative effects on an individual or a group of people?

4.1.4 Active citizenship and citizen journalism

One goal in learning media literacy skills is being encouraged to produce one's own constructive media content to help mitigate local tensions. By engaging in ethical and responsible content creation, people transform from being passive consumers to active participants in their society. This approach is deeply rooted in Paulo Freire's pedagogy, which emphasises that education should lead to the power to transform one's own reality. Freire's idea is that the individual becomes an active participant and creator in her or his own life and community, rather than a victim of circumstances.

In regions of tension, people may feel like passive objects to whom things happen – rather than people who make things happen. But what can be done to encourage people to be active in their own lives and communities? In the case of media education, educators can provide students with hands-on activities, such as learning or activity where people don't just listen or read but do things by themselves. Hands-on activities restore their sense of control, agency and self-efficacy in their own life.

As students create stories that reflect the humanity of their own community, they strengthen their position as valued members of their community. This kind of activity also strengthens students' self-efficacy and self-esteem. This kind of process fosters a sense of hope, too: it proves that their lives are not hopeless or helpless and that media education can be a tool for change in real life.

Exercise **"Mobile journalism as a tool for empowerment for young people – What makes my neighbourhood special?"** on page 52 is an example of citizen journalism. But what is citizen journalism? In regions of tension, citizen journalism emerges when people want to share their own experiences, especially where mainstream media doesn't cover events. It allows them to influence discussions, provide alternative perspectives, quickly share information and produce news and stories from their environment.

In teaching media literacy, it is important to encourage students to be active citizens and media producers. Media educators in regions of tension can invent different kinds of hands-on activities related to media literacy. The role of media educator is simply to encourage students to take the leap and act.

We will explore this further in Chapter 5, which provides concrete examples of these principles in action.

4.1.5 Human rights

How are human rights related to media literacy in regions of tension? Simply put, media literacy fosters human rights because it provides tools for critically and responsibly evaluating information, producing media safely, and respecting others online and in the media. In regions of tension, human rights may not be fully upheld.

In other words, media literacy helps people **access and evaluate information fairly**, understand what information is reliable and what could violate human rights, such as false information about violence. It helps them **express their opinions safely and responsibly**, **supporting the right to freedom of speech and participation in public discussion**.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not legally binding for states, but its political and moral influence is considerable. Its message is that human rights are fundamental and inalienable, and belong equally to all people worldwide.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in English:
[OHCHR | Universal Declaration of Human Rights - English.](#)

Media literacy also **helps protect people from abuse or manipulation**, by being able to identify propaganda, hate speech and misleading content that could threaten the human rights of individuals or groups. Media literacy also **promotes equality and multiple perspectives**, aiming to understand and respect different viewpoints and experiences.

4.1.6 Digital safety

Digital safety is an important issue in regions of tension when speaking about media literacy. **In short, digital safety means protecting oneself online.** This includes keeping all personal information private, using strong passwords, securing devices and connections, avoiding scams and malware, communicating safely, and being careful about what to share. It is a matter of protecting one's identity and data online. It is also about protecting one's wellbeing online.



Checklist for digital safety in regions of tension: How to protect yourself (and others) online?

The most important thing is to always remember **responsibility** and **ethics** in your actions.

Protect your personal information: Do not share personal details such as your address, location, personal ID numbers, phone number or other private information, such as health information. Also, do not share personal information about your family members, friends or any children. Always think carefully about what you post online. Ask yourself for each topic and each time: is this necessary? Why do I want to share this information?

Use complex passwords and two-factor authentication: Also, do not write your passwords down anywhere. Always use a different password for each service online.

Make sure your connections and devices are secure: Use protected Wi-Fi networks and keep your devices up to date.

Beware of scams and malware: Do not open suspicious links or attachments and avoid untrustworthy apps. If you are unsure whether to open something, don't open it!

Always be careful when sharing content, whether it is created by you or others: You can never be too cautious. Think carefully about what you post: sharing images, videos, or text can reveal too much, for example personal information such as your location or other details you might not even consider. Always ask yourself: do I really need to share this? Why am I sharing this information?

Evaluate sources and the accuracy of information: Do not spread uncertain information that could cause panic or misunderstandings. If you are unsure about the accuracy of the information, do not share it.

Be kind and respectful when communicating online: Treating others well also protects you. Also, it is better not to respond at all to inappropriate messages or similar content.

Always consider the consequences: Think responsibly and ethically – could your digital actions endanger your safety or that of your family or others?

But why is digital safety particularly important in regions of tension? Simply because the risks of various abuses, attacks or surveillance are higher. For example, sometimes revealing personal information or one's location can even be life-threatening. If personal data falls into the wrong hands, published information could be for example exploited in conflict situations.

The spread of false information can also cause unnecessary panic, incite anger or other strong emotions, and of course affect safety. Also, in regions of tension, devices and connections may be vulnerable to attacks, and various viruses can steal or otherwise damage people's personal data.

4.2 Pedagogical challenges in teaching media literacy in regions of tension

Imagine a situation where a student is very nervous and has problems with concentrating. The student says: "Why should I study when we are at war? I cannot concentrate." How should one reply to the student? How could one motivate the student to study?

Teaching in regions of tension involves many specific pedagogical challenges, especially in teaching media literacy. When teaching media literacy, it is crucial to examine these challenges so as to be prepared and to address them effectively.

It is important to acknowledge that there are many challenges in regions of tension – in life and in daily routines – that impact people's mental health, everyday existence and their studies. **It is equally important to recognise that educators themselves may experience feelings of powerlessness, and it is helpful to put those feelings into words.** Living in a high-tension area involves challenges that are beyond a teacher's control. Educators can only influence things related to their teaching.

4.2.1 Challenges of motivation, stress and access

So, what kind of challenges there are when teaching in regions of tension? Living in unstable conditions makes it difficult to plan the future. One must live day by day, as the future cannot be planned with certainty. Consequently, a person's faith in the future is put to the test. In such circumstances, finding the motivation to study can be challenging.

The state of chronic stress can also lead to **concentration difficulties, nervousness, restlessness, and various mental health challenges and traumas** among students. Furthermore, the continuous stress and these above-mentioned challenges affect one's self-perception and self-esteem: What am I capable of? What is possible for me? What is within my control, and what is out of my control?

Additionally, in high-tension areas, a major challenge may be that **not all students are able to attend classes**. For instance, getting to school can be difficult for a variety of reasons. Those living further away, particularly in rural areas, may face bigger obstacles to participation than those living in urban centres. Furthermore, **the economic situation** of both the students and

society plays a significant role. **Stable internet connectivity and universal access to it** also remain significant challenges, especially when it comes to distance learning.

In certain regions, an additional challenge is that **people with disabilities or with challenges in learning face significant barriers to accessing education**. Similarly, **the status of girls and women remains a major obstacle in some areas**, where their fundamental right to education is not always guaranteed. So, the question is: how can we guarantee that everyone has access to learning, regardless of gender or disabilities?

4.2.2 Complexities of teaching media literacy

It is very important to be aware of possible **intense polarisation** in regions of tension. In these regions, narratives are often very black and white, or highly polarised. There can be "us versus them" mindset. Emotional reactions are understandable, but as a media educator it is important to be aware of that kind of mindset. What does this mean while teaching media literacy? The challenge is that it can be difficult for students to be critical about sources that support their own group or identity. It is possible that engaging in critical analysis can be felt as an act of disloyalty to the community or is otherwise experienced as difficult.

As a media educator, it is also important to be aware that when media literacy materials or discussions deal with ongoing violence, conflict or injustice, they can **activate personal traumas**. It is possible that students react in different ways when they encounter difficult media content. Sometimes the learning process can be blocked if a student enters a 'fight or flight' mode. Critical, analytical thinking requires a sense of security, which can be difficult to achieve in unstable circumstances in regions of tension. Providing a safe space for learning for everybody requires that educators familiarise themselves with trauma-informed pedagogy. In the next chapter, we will delve deeper into trauma-informed pedagogy.

It is also essential to acknowledge that **information warfare** is constantly present in regions of tension. **Propaganda, censorship and algorithms** affect critical media literacy in many ways. For example, algorithms feed users' content that only reinforces their existing worldview, which is called the echo chamber effect. Also, rapidly evolving applications, such as **the rapid development of artificial intelligence**, create challenges. It is possible that for instance many institutions have no policies regarding the use of AI. Media literacy aims to be the answer to these challenges. Furthermore, **state censorship or the fear of consequences** can prevent open discussion about certain topics. So, the media educator's challenge is how to teach multi-perspectivity if alternative sources are blocked or if using them is risky.

The media educator may also be part of the same society and carry the same tensions or traumas. Sometimes it is difficult to remain a neutral teacher if the topic affects one's own safety or the safety of one's family. All in all, the challenge is **how to be a neutral media educator and how to sensitively promote dialogue and empathy**? How to balance promoting freedom of speech and ensuring student protection? What is the role of a media educator in fostering dialogue?

4.3 Trauma-informed pedagogy and resilient teaching

4.3.1 Trauma-informed pedagogy

Imagine a situation where a student is very withdrawn and quiet. As an educator, one may find it difficult to find a connection with him or her. At times, they may also be restless, nervous or aggressive without any apparent reason at that specific moment. Why does the student behave this way?

First, the educator can imagine that the student's behaviour is an iceberg. The restlessness, withdrawal or aggression visible above the surface are just the top of the iceberg. A big part of the iceberg (fear, confusion and the burden of past traumatic experiences) remains invisible beneath the water. **Trauma-informed pedagogy is the tool for looking below the surface.** It is about asking: What has happened to you and how could I help you?

Looking below the surface, understanding and being empathetic towards the student are the main skills of educators in regions of tension. Living in conflict zones (such as war zones, crisis areas or politically unstable environments) exposes individuals to prolonged, multifaceted trauma. These traumas are often not isolated incidents, but rather a continuous state of being. It is very important to distinguish this continuous state of being from isolated traumatic events. Of course, isolated and severe traumatic events can also happen to people who are already living in conflict zones or otherwise unstable environments.

This guide explores trauma-informed pedagogy from the perspective of people living in a constant state of stress within regions of tension, rather than focusing on isolated traumatic events. For media educators, it is crucial to understand how a stressful, continuous state of being affects students and their learning process and how to create a safe space for learning.

4.3.2 How do stressful and traumatic living conditions affect learning?

Trauma affects learning in many ways. **When a student experiences traumatic events and lives in stressful, unstable conditions, the body and mind can remain in a constant state of high alert.** In this state, concentration, memory and the absorption of new information are weakened because the brain directs its resources primarily toward survival. The production of cortisol, also known as stress hormone, accelerates. In a learning environment, this can manifest for example as withdrawal or restlessness, difficulties in emotional regulation, or challenges in social relationships.

When talking about trauma and continuous stress, the mind and body are not separate islands. If the mind is unable to process stress, it begins to manifest through the body as **somatic, physical symptoms**. Somatic symptoms can include, for example, sleeping problems, intense exhaustion, unspecified stomach aches or nausea, headaches or muscle tension, shallow or rapid breathing, and heart palpitations.

Continuous stress or living in a traumatic environment can affect a student's **faith in the future**. They may feel that there is no hope and that planning the future might not even be worthwhile. Therefore, a state of continuous stress can significantly impact **learning motivation**.

Ongoing stress also shapes how we perceive ourselves: Who am I, what do I know, and what can I achieve? **Establishing a connection to oneself, to others and to the surrounding world can become a major challenge**, despite being essential for life.

Finally, it is essential to recognise that in unstable conditions, **there is almost never time for recovery**. This is why creating a sense of security is so important: this sense of safety is a fundamental human need and directly impacts learning. A safe, predictable and empathetic environment supports recovery from traumas and creates the necessary conditions for learning for students living in a constant state of stress.

4.3.3 How to create a safe space for learning?

The role of a trauma-informed educator is not to 'cure' the student, but to create an environment where the nervous system can feel safe. How can we create a safe space for learning in these kinds of circumstances? This kind of safe space is achieved in different ways.

First, **building a connection with students** is truly essential and forms the foundation of a safe space. When a connection is established, learning becomes easier and information is better retained. This connection can mean a bond between the student and the teacher, with another peer, or even with the entire group. It is worthwhile for the educator to invest in building this connection by being genuinely interested in the students and their thoughts, and by actively listening to them. All the factors discussed here for creating a safe space also play a vital role in establishing a connection.

Predictability is another key in creating a safe space for learning. In unstable circumstances, it is vital. In practice, this involves established **routines** and **a clear structure**. At the start of each session, the agenda and schedule for the lesson or day should be clearly communicated to the students. It is also important **to clearly articulate the learning aims**: What are we expected to learn during today's lesson? When predictability is not possible, it is important to establish a connection with the students. The educator must have a way to ground students in the moment and with one another. This can be supported, for example, with some kind of exercise.

Feeling heard is crucial for a safe space. Educators should encourage sharing feelings and opinions through active listening. Providing plenty of room for personal experiences strengthens the bond between everyone. Pair and small-group work are effective tools, especially for those who find speaking in large groups difficult.

It is important that learning takes place in small steps. **Review and repetition** are essential, as memory and information processing may not function optimally under stress or cognitive load. For this reason, **taking frequent breaks is vital**. The educator should monitor the students' alertness and energy levels, providing even short breaks whenever necessary. It is beneficial

to move the body during exercises or breaks, as the nervous system may be in a state of hyperarousal. Physical movement is an effective way to help manage this.

Creating collective rules is an effective way to build a safe environment. Allowing students to decide on break times, for example, gives them a sense of control that may be missing in their unstable daily lives. This experience of agency and influence is crucial and empowering.

Emotional security is an essential element. This is demonstrated by an educator who is kind, respectful and calm. **Maintaining a calm, stable presence** is vital when students are facing instability elsewhere. Additionally, **eye contact** plays a big role in building trust and a sense of belonging. It is important to remember that even a single hour (for example a short media literacy workshop) can provide a sense of stability in the students' lives, even if everything else is unstable. **Offering choices** is another way to increase emotional safety. There should always be an alternative available if a student finds a certain activity too challenging or overwhelming.

It is important for **the educator to be on the same level as the students**. The teacher is also learning from the students, rather than being a so-called 'all-knowing' figure who simply hands down information. This mutual learning and equality build a strong connection.

Teaching should ideally involve **stimulation for all senses**, ensuring that every sense receives nourishment. Engaging different senses through teaching methods helps individuals stay connected and grounded—to themselves, to others, and to their environment. This includes sight, smell, taste, hearing and touch. As mentioned earlier, movement is also important. Exercises that incorporate movement can help students stay grounded. Organising the learning environment to nourish different senses can also be calming and grounding; for instance, candles and music can serve as powerful grounding elements. If possible, the learning can sometimes be moved to a completely different environment. A new environment provides fresh sensory nourishment and, once again, can help in building a connection with oneself and others.

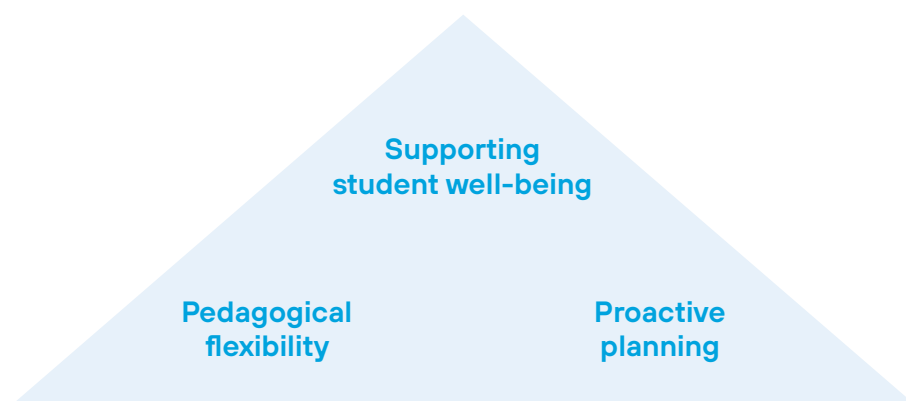
Educators must also be aware of their own burdens and traumas in regions of tension. How is constant stress affecting their lives and teaching? To improve well-being, they must have the opportunity to discuss and share their thoughts and concerns with colleagues or supervisors. **It is also crucial to ensure that students are not re-traumatised**. When discussing unpleasant or potentially traumatic topics, it is essential **to avoid going into details**.

When people lose hope, they also lose the ability to develop resilience skills. **Building a sense of agency is empowering and creates hope**. When an educator creates opportunities for students to, for example, **teach others or contribute to their community in some way**, it strengthens the student's self-efficacy and self-esteem, leading to true empowerment. These factors foster a feeling of hope and safety.

4.3.4 Resilient teaching

What does resilient teaching mean? Basically, it means flexibility in teaching methods and the teacher's attitude. Resilient teaching is about adapting to changing circumstances quickly and without compromising the quality of teaching. Especially in regions of tension, resilient teaching is essential – it is teaching that does not break under pressure.

Here are the components of resilient teaching:



Pedagogical flexibility is the foundation of resilient teaching. It means that educator does not rely on just one way of teaching. For example, if face-to-face teaching is not possible, online teaching will be organised. Or if technology doesn't work, educator always has a plan B.

Proactive planning in teaching means that the learning materials and tasks are accessible and adaptable in challenging situations. Proactive planning and pedagogical flexibility go hand in hand. It means, for example, hybrid teaching: teaching happens both in the classroom and remotely. Proactive planning also requires clear communication. Instructions need to be clear for every student to know what to do even if face-to-face teaching is interrupted for some reason. Also, it is important to consider the needs of diverse learners during the planning.

Pedagogical flexibility together with proactive planning are the foundation of resilient teaching, and a guiding principle is **supporting student mental health and well-being**. It serves as a pedagogical compass in resilient teaching. Resilient teaching considers students' diverse life situations and stress levels. The aim is to create a safe learning environment, supporting students' personal resilience and their ability to navigate challenges.

4.4 Teaching methods for fragile contexts

It is important to consider that when a media educator chooses teaching methods for regions of tension or fragile contexts, the pedagogical focus should be on management of safety, trust and emotional regulation.

When the environment is fragile or tense, the educator is not just a provider of information, but a creator of safe space. As mentioned in the previous chapter, learning only happens when it is safe. Since students' sense of safety is compromised in fragile areas, it is crucial that the choice of teaching methods emphasises the students' own opportunities for influence and agency. **'Learning by doing'** is essential. Therefore, it is useful to design tasks for students that allow them to learn by doing, such as activities where they can take **an active role** within their own living environments and communities, for example teaching in their own communities.

One very good teaching method in regions of tension is **flipped learning**. Flipped learning is an instructional approach where the traditional structure of a lesson is turned upside down. It is not just a single method, but a pedagogical model where students familiarise themselves with new material independently before the shared session. Flipped learning combines 'learning by doing' with the opportunity for students to take an active role in their own education.

But what does flipped learning mean in practice? Instead of a traditional lecture, students explore the topic at their own pace (for example, by watching short videos, reading articles, or listening to podcasts). The aim is to acquire foundational knowledge of the subject before entering the classroom. Since the teacher does not need to spend time lecturing on basic information, classroom time is freed up for active engagement. An active engagement can be group work, problem-solving, discussions or "learning by doing" tasks. The educator is no longer the source of information at the centre, but rather a mentor who moves around to help students apply what they have learned.

And why is flipped learning an effective tool for regions of tension? The effectiveness is based on the students' ability to regulate their own learning, which increases their sense of control. Flipped learning can also offer room for psychological safety: the classroom can become a place where it is safe to fail and discuss with others, rather than just listening passively. The model enables the use of versatile materials (visual, auditory, text) and creates various interaction opportunities.

In addition to flipped learning, **problem-based learning (PBL)** is an effective tool in teaching media literacy in fragile contexts. It is also learning by doing. Again, students take an active role in their learning process. Problem-based learning is a pedagogical method where learning starts directly from a real-world problem or phenomenon. PBL turns the traditional way of learning upside down: instead of first reading a book or articles and then solving a task, studies begin with a task to which the answer is not yet known.

PBL is carried out in groups. The group is presented with a problem that they must solve together by combining their existing knowledge with new information. They are encouraged to seek out new data.

Why is this an effective teaching method in fragile contexts? The students understand why they are studying a specific topic because it helps them solve a concrete challenge. This may increase the student's sense of control and self-efficacy in unstable living environments or fragile contexts. Furthermore, the information is linked to practical application.

At the same time, students develop skills in information retrieval, critical thinking, teamwork and communication. The educator's role is crucial: in this method, the educator acts as a facilitator or mentor, and the aim is to ask questions that help the group stay on the right direction and deepen their own thinking. The educator helps students to learn, search for and process information rather than providing ready-made answers to the problem.

Flipped learning and PBL are teaching methods which are suitable for a wide range of target groups, from universities to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and youth work. These teaching methods can be applied in various ways in fragile contexts, depending on the

specific situations, and the target group. For instance, PBL can be implemented remotely, if it is possible for students to communicate with one another somehow in groups. PBL can also be structured remotely so that students first attempt to solve the problem independently. And if the circumstances allow, they can work through the task together in a group.

These are just a few examples of methods used in fragile contexts. **Regardless of the method, it is essential to create tasks that resonate with the students' own lives and to utilise interactive methods.** It is vital for the student to be able to take an active role. When they are given an active role and feel that they are solving real-world problems, it is empowering and brings a sense of meaning amid the difficult daily life in fragile contexts.

Likewise in fragile contexts, **it is important to utilise a mixture of different teaching methods.** Combining different methods, such as independent work, remote assignments, teamwork and different kinds of exercises, ensures that the students can continue their studies, regardless of the situation or resources. When working in fragile contexts, diverse methods also help reduce polarisation, provide safe ways to participate, and enable the safe examination of different perspectives.

As mentioned earlier, it is important that learning in fragile contexts **engages all the senses** (such as sight, hearing and touch). This should be kept in mind when planning teaching methods. Learning materials and examples can include videos, podcasts, and various news articles, used in varied combinations. **Technology** can also be leveraged in many ways, such as through online learning tools. If the teaching moves partially or entirely online, then online learning platforms become essential.

It should be kept in mind that media literacy lessons **include plenty of discussion** – both as a whole class and in pairs or small groups. Therefore, it is crucial to choose teaching methods that give students opportunity to discuss, share their thoughts and feel heard. Activities like debates, role-playing and drama exercises are also effective in media literacy education. When students immerse themselves in different roles, their empathy may increase.

Additionally, while teaching in regions of tension presents unique pedagogical challenges, many can be managed with the right preparation. There is also a separate checklist for preparing for them in this guide, page 56.

An important part of media literacy education, in addition to choosing teaching methods, is teaching students **to evaluate their own learning**. It is important to clearly state the learning aims at the beginning of a media literacy lesson – what they are meant to learn today? Equally important is reviewing the learning aims at the end of the lesson. Did we learn what we were supposed to? What did we learn today, and how could we apply these skills in our everyday life or within our own communities?

4.5 Innovative use of technology in teaching

What can we do if teaching and learning is not possible in the same classroom? During the coronavirus pandemic, learning was transitioned to distance learning and online meetings. In regions of tension, innovative use of technology and infrastructure in teaching can be part of everyday life.

In this guide, the focus is on **technology as an enabler of learning**. Innovative use of technology does not always mean having the latest devices but rather **finding creative ways to use what is available**, such as mobile phones or basic internet tools, to foster critical thinking.

The key to successful teaching is building a functional and **resilient infrastructure for teaching** in unstable environments. Resilient teaching requires resilient infrastructure.

Useful vocabulary for this chapter:

- **Asynchronous learning:** Learning at your own pace does not require a continuous internet connection.
- **Resource-constrained environments:** Settings with limited resources or infrastructure.
- **Mobile teaching:** A strategy designed to work primarily on mobile phones.
- **Digital storytelling:** The practice of using computer-based tools to tell stories.
- **Blended learning:** An approach that combines face-to-face instruction with digital tools.

4.5.1 Resource-constrained environments and asynchronous learning

In regions of tension, the teaching and learning happens often in resource-constrained environments. What does this mean in practice? When talking about teaching in these types of environments, it refers for example to situations where:

- Internet connections are slow or unstable.
- Students do not have their own computers – they use shared devices or their own smartphones.
- The electricity supply is unreliable.
- There is a lack of educational materials.

Various factors may threaten teaching and learning process and the safety of both students and teachers. That's why teaching media literacy requires flexible, creative and diverse methods.

When teaching in regions of tension, asynchronous learning is sometimes the only way to learn. This refers to teaching where the teacher and the student are not interacting in real-time. What does this mean in practice when teaching media literacy? Students can watch video lectures or read materials or do assignments whenever it suits them (and whenever electricity or internet access is available). The asynchronous model allows for downloading materials and studying them later. There is no specific time when everyone is required to be online simultaneously. Possible discussions take place on messaging platforms (such as WhatsApp groups or learning management systems), where responses are given whenever possible.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, asynchronous learning is a key component of resilience in conditions where infrastructure is unstable. The flexibility of asynchronous learning guarantees that if students are unable to reach their learning institutions due to security threats, asynchronous learning and materials ensure the continuity of education at home.

4.5.2 Mobile teaching and student as content creators

Imagine a situation where a student doesn't have a stable internet connection or computer, or doesn't have the possibility to go to school or other learning institute: What to do? How can one be a student – or teach students – living in these kinds of circumstances?

One answer to this question is mobile teaching. Mobile devices are often cheaper than computers, which makes education more accessible to a larger group of people, especially for the people in regions of tension. In all its simplicity, mobile teaching means learning and teaching using smartphones or tablets.

The greatest advantage of mobile teaching is freedom. The student is not tied to a computer or a classroom. It enables learning anytime – and anywhere. Mobile teaching supports the asynchronous learning model.

How does teaching media literacy work in practice with mobile phones? In addition to teaching theory (such as providing various texts, videos, and audio for students), it gives teachers plenty of freedom to create a variety of engaging tasks for students.

Once again, this highlights the importance of students' agency in regions of tension.

Technology can serve as a bridge to agency, allowing students to transform from being passive consumers of media to active content creators.

When teaching media literacy, it is also important to encourage students to create media content ethically and responsibly. As a media educator, it is important to consider **what kind of assignments can encourage and inspire students to act and create media content about their own life and communities**. When assignments encourage action and the creation of one's own media content, students can act as active participants while completing the assignments. This strengthens their sense of participation and control. They can use their own voice and bring forth their own story, experiences and living environment. This makes learning more personal and motivating. As people learn to become responsible and ethical content creators, they realise that they can produce meaningful, responsible content about the issues

and injustices that affect them and their communities in daily life. This can have a positive impact on their self-efficacy, self-esteem and belief in the future.

Creating new assignments can also be a rewarding activity for the media educator as well. The best assignments for students are concrete, real-life tasks related to their personal experiences.

One concrete way to encourage students to create content is digital storytelling about their own lives. It is easy because with mobile devices anyone can easily learn to edit a short video or audio or just take photos. Storytelling is personal, because students can tell stories about things that are relevant to their own lives – without forgetting the ethical principles of creating media content.

In unstable conditions, sometimes the educational infrastructure may change. In those moments, teaching happens in whatever way it is possible. Occasionally, blended learning or hybrid teaching, which means using face-to-face instruction combined with distance learning tools, depending on the circumstances. Even in unstable conditions, teaching is always possible. **As an educator, the most important thing to remember is not to let unstable or difficult circumstances discourage the students.**

Sources and inspiration:

For this chapter, the following experts were interviewed: fact-checker Pipsa Havula from FaktaBaari, psychologist Nina Lyytinen, trauma-informed human development specialist Sherry Tehrani, and journalist-teachers Tamara Abu Laban and Hisham Mellhemallaham from the Bethlehem University in Palestine.

FaktaBaari: [Check – 3 questions: Digital information literacy](#) (YouTube)

FaktaBaari: [Tunnista – virhe, valhe, juoru: Digitaalinen informaatiolukutaito nuorille](#) (YouTube, in Finnish)

FaktaBaari (2022): *Digitaalinen informaatiolukutaito. Yleistajuinen opas digitaalisen uutisvirran seuraajille.* (in Finnish)

FaktaBaari (2023): *Digitaalinen informaatiolukutaito. Tekoälyopas.* (in Finnish)

Freire, P. (1970): *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.*

Goleman, D. (1995): *Emotional Intelligence.*

International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) – Ethical Guidelines: [Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists - IFJ](#)

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Kahneman, D. (2011): *Thinking, Fast and Slow.*

Mediakasvatusseura (2022): [Infograafi: Kognitiivisia vinoumia – Mediakasvatusseura ry](#) (in Finnish)

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Psykopodiaa-podcast, Lyytinen, N. (2025): [Trauma ja oppiminen. Vieraana Kirsi Peltonen. Psykopodiaa-podcast 189. – Psykologi Nina Lyytinen](#) (in Finnish)

Taimela, I. & Tammelander, T. (editor). 2022. *Mobiilietäopetuksen toimintamalli: Lapsen oikeus oppimiseen hauraila alueilla.* Kansanvalistusseura sr. (in Finnish)

United Nations: [OHCHR | Universal Declaration of Human Rights - English](#)

Van der Linden, S. (2023): *Foolproof: Why Misinformation Infects Our Minds and How to Build Immunity.*

AI has been used in this chapter as a tool for planning and brainstorming.

5 Case: Inclusive teaching of media literacy in Palestine 2023-2026

5.1 Background of the media literacy work at Kvs Foundation

Kvs Foundation (The Lifelong Learning Foundation) has been engaged in media education work in Palestine in cooperation with Palestinian partners since 2015 with development cooperation funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. In the project *Inclusive teaching of media literacy in Palestine* (conducted in 2023-26), Kvs Foundation's partner has been the Institute for Community Partnership (ICP) at the Bethlehem University. In other previous projects, collaboration has also taken place with Birzeit University.

At the core of Kvs Foundation's media education work is promoting democratic structures of Palestinian society by supporting knowledge of media literacy as well as training Palestinian journalists and journalism students in media literacy so that they can share their expertise within their own communities. Target groups in the projects have been journalists, communication professionals, journalism students, youth workers, NGO workers, teachers and community leaders who work with marginalised groups in vulnerable areas in the West Bank. Finnish and local journalists have also worked together as trainers in Palestine, and Finnish journalists have produced reports from Palestine for the Finnish media.

In this chapter 5, project *Inclusive teaching of media literacy in Palestine (2023-26)* is presented because it serves as an example case of how the principles for teaching media literacy in regions of tension, described in this guide, can be put into practice.

5.2 Why is media literacy needed in Palestine?

In Palestine, people live amid ongoing tensions. In such an environment, propaganda, hate speech, disinformation and emotionally charged content spread widely. Social media is a key source of information in Palestine, especially for young people. Algorithms often feed polarising content, which can increase divisions. Media literacy is needed because it supports critical thinking, fact checking and responsible content sharing.

Palestinian journalists work in challenging, dangerous conditions. In Gaza, nearly 200 reporters were killed by the Israeli army during the first 18 months of the war in 2023–25. In practice, Gaza is under siege and largely cut off from media coverage. In the West Bank, journalists have also faced difficulties. Since the outbreak of the Israel–Hamas war on 7 October 2023, the situation has worsened, with more arrests and greater obstacles to their work.

While journalism students teach media literacy in their own communities, a reciprocal learning process emerges: the students gain first-hand insight into the everyday media literacy and critical thinking skills of the public. Critical media literacy skills strengthen citizens' ability to participate in public discourse and make their voices heard ethically and responsibly.

The role of citizen journalists is strong in Palestine – why?

- There are few national channels in Palestine. The West Bank and Gaza have different media.
- Mainstream media is not so strong, and people turn to social media for information, especially TikTok, Instagram and Telegram. Therefore the role of citizen journalists is significant in Palestine.
- For example, WhatsApp groups for residents of different neighbourhoods are also popular. They are commonly used to share local news and quickly provide updates on the situation.
- And the more information is sought from social media, the greater the need for media literacy.

It is also important to recognise that the Palestinian population is young, making media literacy even more crucial. Media literacy provides young people with tools to empower themselves in challenging living conditions: it teaches them to express themselves constructively, participate in public discourse, and protect themselves from propaganda, manipulation and digital risks. Mobile journalism as a tool for empowerment works very well for young people in Palestine.

At its best, media literacy can give an experience of empowerment and hope in difficult living conditions. People feel that they can make a difference, and are not just victims of circumstances. It can provide the sense that people's voice and the voice of the community are heard.

5.3 The goals of the project *Inclusive teaching of media literacy in Palestine (2023-26)*

The aim of the project *Inclusive teaching of media literacy in Palestine* is to support the integration of media literacy as a core part of the curriculum at Bethlehem University, strengthen the pedagogical skills of university teachers, support the critical media literacy skills of journalism students, and promote community engagement in the Palestinian territories.

Currently, media literacy is not included in the national curriculum in Palestine. The project's main goal is to embed media literacy as part of the university and, through community projects, into different communities in Palestine. Community projects are described in more detail later in this chapter.

From a broader societal perspective, the project supports the development of Palestinian civil society by strengthening media literacy and its teaching. In addition, it aims to promote the population's right to information and to reinforce active citizenship and the conditions for democracy.

5.4 How to promote media literacy teaching activities in the project?

So, how can we promote the learning of media literacy in Palestine? First, professional development training in pedagogical skills and media literacy is organised through the project every spring for Palestinian teachers at Bethlehem University. Journalism lecturers are provided with in-service training in media literacy. On an annual basis, we explore current and emerging topics, e.g. the use of AI in multimedia journalism.

Each year during the project, the Palestinian journalism lecturers, together with Finnish volunteer journalists, organise a media literacy course for third-year journalism students. The course includes teaching of topics such as the principles and ethics of journalism, fact-checking tools, human rights, citizen journalism and responsible use of AI in journalism.

At the end of the course, students work in groups to conduct community projects related to media literacy. These community projects are implemented in different communities, for example in Bethlehem, East Jerusalem and Hebron, and in rural areas. The projects are carried out in collaboration with local non-governmental organisations and schools. The following chapter describes in more detail the activities these community projects may include.

In the media literacy courses, the topics are fine-tuned each year according to the needs of the journalism students, while the learning aims remain the same. The learning aims of the critical reading of media course are **to learn to consume and produce media critically and responsibly**.



At Bethlehem University, in continuing education, we taught media literacy and participatory teaching methods to lecturers from various faculties of the university. In this photograph, the lecturers reflect on their relationship with the statement: "I'm a very critical user of media."

Photo: Bethlehem University



In the Inclusive Media Literacy in Palestine project, journalism students have carried out community projects related to media literacy in places such as Bethlehem, Hebron, and East Jerusalem.

5.4.1 Community projects – practicing active citizenship in Palestine

Community projects are a central part of the project's annual media literacy courses at Bethlehem University. Organised by the Institute for Community Partnership (ICP) at Bethlehem University, students engage in **community service**, where they carry out practical work in the community as part of their studies. This includes, for example, cooperation with local communities or organisations, planning and implementing community projects, and volunteering or providing services to the community.

By teaching media literacy in the project's community projects, students serve civil society and practice active citizenship. By working with different communities, the projects offer journalism students the opportunity to apply in practice what they have learned in media literacy course. Through community projects, students bring media literacy discussions beyond the university and into everyday community contexts in Palestine.

In the implementation, the journalism students first choose the target group, topic and learning aims related to media literacy (for example the topic could be fact-checking, human rights related to media literacy, AI, digital security or whatever which is related to media literacy). Choices are based on what the communities need. It is important that the students themselves are interested in and enthusiastic about the topic of their project.



In one community project, journalism students taught children and young people aged 11–17 about media literacy at the African Community Association in Jerusalem. The workshops covered topics such as critical image analysis and sensationalist journalism.

Photo: Dareen-Mayar Alqadi

Second, they plan the method of implementation. It is good to emphasise that the implementation can be very creative. Students are encouraged to develop diverse, innovative ways to carry out the project and to feel a strong sense of ownership over the process. At its best, the experience is empowering for the students.

Why are community projects so important and empowering? Community projects encourage students to step beyond their academic comfort zone to active citizenship, to participate in community activities and take responsibility for information dissemination. By designing and implementing small-scale community projects, journalism students engage with diverse groups in society and address media literacy topics that are directly relevant to the local context in Palestine. Through this process, they develop a deeper understanding of how media literacy can improve critical thinking.

They learn how to use media literacy to influence societal issues and that increases their sense of participation.

Working with different communities in Palestine, students learn to understand local needs, interests, and challenges. They collaborate with people of different ages, backgrounds, and interests, which promotes social understanding and empathy. This makes the projects meaningful for both the students and communities – and strengthens students' sense of civic participation and professional responsibility. Planning and implementing the community projects give students the opportunity to be creative, try different approaches, and find innovative solutions. It is also important for them to learn from mistakes, to learn by doing. This increases students' motivation and enjoyment of learning – and self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Examples of community projects in Palestine

A community project related to media literacy can really be anything – the only limit is your creativity.

These few examples of community projects are meant to serve as a spark and inspiration. A media literacy project can be anything that excites and interests the students:

- Media literacy workshops in schools and various organisations for different target groups (children, young people, elderly people)
- Educational theatre performance on media literacy
- Social media campaigns related to media literacy topics
- Walking tours in the village with community women (discussing and having little sessions about media literacy topics along the way)
- Mural on media literacy in front of a school.



Journalism students organised a community project for women in the village of Battir. They arranged a walk through the village, stopping at various points to present and discuss topics related to media literacy. Battir is a village in the West Bank, Palestine, located near the city of Bethlehem.

Photo: Sireen Najajrah

This ability to influence matters can also often inspire hope in students. It shows that it is possible to try to change things, and students may feel that they are not only victims of circumstances but they experience themselves as active agents and feel a sense of control. This is usually empowering.

5.5 Challenges in the learning environment

Why should I study when there is a war going on? This is a question that some students have asked during the project, and it is a good question. Palestine is a highly tense region, and living conditions and situations can change very quickly. In autumn 2023, during the project, war began in Gaza. The situation has significantly affected students' motivation to study. Students in the project have reported feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, nervousness, depression and difficulties in concentrating. For example, lecture-style teaching can be difficult for students because it is hard to concentrate for a long period of time at once.

Even before the war in Gaza, the everyday lives, studies, and overall wellbeing of Palestinian students and teachers were affected by the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Many Palestinians' human rights are not realised, and Palestinians live their daily lives under constant strain, facing major stress factors, dangers, violence and traumatic situations. All these factors also affect the Palestinians' sense of hope for the future, both for teachers and students: in these conditions, it is difficult to plan the future.

In students' daily lives, the occupation means, for example, that to make it to university lectures, they must leave home very early because of delays caused by checkpoints. This requires students to be highly motivated for their studies. Students cannot know or plan how long their journeys will take, even if the trip itself is short. For the same reason, they may also arrive late for lectures.

During the project, it has on several occasions been necessary to switch from onsite to remote teaching at Bethlehem University. Travelling to the university has been too dangerous or challenging or simply impossible for students and teachers. Remote teaching is demanding for everyone, especially in a war situation. Students should have the opportunity to go to the university and have social contacts, as well as a sense of hope and belonging to a community. Lack of motivation to study may arise.

The Kvs Foundation's project's media literacy courses, organised in collaboration with Finnish volunteer journalists, have also been forced to be held in hybrid format, with Finnish trainers teaching from Finland remotely while Palestinian teachers conducted the sessions in a university classroom in Palestine. In this, the collaboration between Finnish and Palestinian trainers played a central role. Working as pairs, they planned and taught each day's course sessions together – in hybrid mode. The co-teaching approach proved highly fruitful, as instructors learned from one another through joint planning and innovative classroom practice.



We taught media literacy to journalism students, with Finnish journalists delivering training remotely from Finland. Palestinian teachers and students were present at Bethlehem University.

Photo: Bethlehem University

When planning the lessons, special attention had to be paid to how the absence of one teacher from the classroom could affect the session. This highlighted the role and vigilance of the teacher who was present in the classroom, with whom the exercises were carried out. While the trainers deepened both their pedagogical expertise, they also learned from each other about the media environments, journalism practices, and training methods of both cultures.

How to turn challenges into opportunities in the *Inclusive teaching of media literacy in Palestine project*

Teaching media literacy in challenging learning environments, such as Palestine, requires **flexibility, creativity, collaboration and continuing learning**:

- **Innovative and interactive approaches:** Such as community projects, and interactive exercises in media literacy course, allow students to actively learn by doing. These methods not only build critical media literacy skills but also foster agency, creativity and confidence among students and community members.
- **Flexibility:** Flexibility means switching to remote teaching when necessary. Students can continue studying regardless of the situation. Teachers can respond quickly to all kinds of challenges, and exercises are adapted for both remote and in-person teaching.
- **Collaborative teaching:** Local and international educators form teaching pairs. By planning and teaching trainings together, even remotely, they can ensure continuity, support each other and combine diverse perspectives.
- **Continuing teacher training and media literacy course for journalism students:** Media literacy tools and skills need to be continuously updated. Annual teacher training and media literacy course for 3rd year students is designed to address this need. The learning needs of learners are assessed, and continuing education is designed according to these learning needs. **And it is important that learning continues, no matter what the circumstances are.**

In Palestine, living in unstable conditions can lead people to spend much of their time in survival mode. Their focus shifts to getting through the day, and cognitive functions may be disrupted as the production of stress hormone cortisol increases. As a result, students' ability to concentrate may be under strain. This affects not only students but also teachers, all other university staff, as well as communities and organisations. At the same time, long-term uncertainty and constantly shifting living conditions have led many Palestinians to develop a strong capacity for rapid and flexible adaptation, contributing to a high level of resilience.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, violence in the area has further increased because of the war. The economic situation is poor, and organisations' funding and operational capacity have faced significant difficulties. Another challenge has been that it has sometimes been hard to find partner organisations for community projects. In spring 2026, the Iran war began. This has further worsened the situation in the region.

At the beginning of this chapter, a student asked the question: 'Why should I study when there is a war going on?' This is an extremely important question. As a response, the teachers at the Bethlehem University aim to provide tools for maintaining motivation to study. They believe, and teach their students, that education and media literacy are the best tools for confronting the prevailing conditions.

According to both teachers and students, Kvs Foundation's projects media literacy courses organised for journalism students, together with the community projects, are concrete tools for increasing study motivation. In addition, course including interactive teaching and tasks and the community projects strengthen students' self-confidence, as well as their sense of control and hope. Their sense of being heard. Their sense of being seen. Their sense of being valuable.



Sources and inspiration:

For this chapter, the following experts from the Bethlehem University were interviewed: journalist-teachers Tamara Abu Laban and Hisham Mellhemallaham and students of journalism Amal Al Heeh and Dareen-Mayar Elqadi, and psychologist Nina Lyytinen.

Kvs Foundation (2026): [Kattava medialukutaito-opetus Palestiinassa \(2023–2026\) - Kvs-säätiö](#) (In Finnish)

Mediakasvatusseura (2022): [Media minuuden vahvistajana - Mediakasvatusseura ry](#) (In Finnish)

Mustikainen, T. (2014): *Kielletty kansa – elämää Palestiinalaisalueilla*. (In Finnish)

Reporters Without Borders (Index 2025): [Index | RSF](#)

Toimittajat Ilman Rajoja (2025): [Taloudellinen ahdinko suuri uhka lehdistönvapaudelle – medioiden taloustilanne luokitellaan maailmanlaajuisesti ensimmäistä kertaa vaikeaksi](#) (in Finnish)

Appendix:

Tips and exercises



Tips and exercises from chapter 2:

Discussion on the importance of media literacy in everyday life

The media educator can lead a discussion based on the following questions.

Imagine what would happen, and what the consequences would be:

- A) If no-one in the world could identify reliable information and everyone shared only false information?
- B) If everyone in the world could produce, identify and share only reliable information?
- C) What would the world be like in ten years if we had never developed media literacy?

These questions can be discussed, for example, first in pairs and then together with the whole group under the guidance of the media educator.

Discussion on the definition of media literacy

Media literacy is a broad concept. When teaching media literacy, it is useful to start by breaking the concept down through a question: **What skills might media literacy include?**

The media educator can lead the discussion based on the list on page 6.

Tips and exercises from chapter 3:

Exercise on algorithms and echo chamber effects

Learning aim: To examine the influence of algorithms on students' worldviews and to explore the phenomenon of echo chambers.

1. **Browsing a social media account.** First, ask the students to independently log into the social media account they use most frequently (e.g., Instagram, TikTok). Allow them to browse their feed freely for a few minutes.
2. **Questions.** After browsing, ask the following questions to the students (depending on the group size, these questions can be discussed as a class or in pairs first, and then as a class):
 - What kind of content does your social media account contain?
 - What types of accounts do you follow?
 - What topics does your feed address?
 - Why do you follow these specific accounts?
3. **Reflection about worldview.** Next, ask the students (depending on the group size, these questions can be discussed as a class or in pairs first, and then as a class):
 - Does your social media feed include topics that you do not like or do not consider important? If so, what kind of content is it?
 - Is the content on your feed mostly things you like, or does it exclusively feature topics that you find important or agree with? If so, why does the content in your social media account feature topics that you find important?
 - What are the potential risks if your social media account only contains content that you consider important and that supports your own worldview?
4. **Conclusion.** Discuss with the students the possibility that their social media accounts might only show content that reinforces their own worldview. What do they think about that? What is the solution for trying to be neutral when navigating social media? Is it possible to be neutral?

At this point, the teacher can present the concept of **echo chamber effect**, which means that algorithms may provide users only with content that supports their own worldview. And this might further deepen tensions. In addition to this, you can mention the concept of **confirmation bias** (more information about confirmation bias and emotional regulation in chapter 4.1).

Tips and exercises from chapter 4:

Exercise on emotional regulation (4.1.1 Emotional regulation)

Learning aim: Students learn to recognise their own emotional reactions and understand how confirmation bias can influence what they believe and choose to share.

First, show students an image, headline, or social media post that evokes strong emotions (for example, anger or fear), and ask students to respond quickly:

- What are you feeling right now?
- Would you like to share this on social media? Why? Or why not?

These questions can be discussed together first.

Secondly, you can discuss these questions related to **confirmation bias** in small groups and after that together as a whole group:

- Does this content seem to support something I already believe?
- Could it be one-sided or misleading?
- Whose perspective is missing here? Or is anything missing?

After that, it is important to teach **to stop and “feel the feeling” and discuss these issues:**

- Encourage the students to first take a few deep breaths when encountering content that evokes strong emotions
- Encourage them to name the emotion(s) they are feeling (for example “I am angry” or “I am frightened or concerned”)
- Encourage them to ask: Why does this evoke such a strong reaction in me?
For example, is there something here that touches on something personal?

Remember: It is important to address that you shouldn't act or share information before taking a calm moment to pause! It's important to explain what confirmation bias means. **Discuss how strong emotions, combined with confirmation bias, can lead to quick, sometimes harmful decisions.** Media literacy therefore means the ability to slow down, recognise the emotion, and think critically before acting.

Exercise on identifying disinformation

(4.1.2 Identifying disinformation)

It is almost impossible to tell whether, for example, images created by AI are real or not. Still, there are few tools which can help to identify whether a photo is fake or not.

Learning aim: Learn to use 1–4 fact-checking tools when verifying photos

Show a few photos (at least one real photo, the others fake) and ask students to verify the photos with fact-checking tools, such as: **Google Images Reverse Search** and **Image Whisperer**. They must answer the question: Is this photo fake or not?

Google Images Reverse Search: It allows you to upload an image or paste the image's URL to see where else on the internet the same image has been used. This helps determine whether the image is original or, for example, edited somehow or circulated online in the wrong context. You can also find a similar tool in **Yandex** and **Bing**, for example.

Image Whisperer: At the time of this guide's publication, Image Whisperer is a newer online tool that helps identify whether an image is likely AI-generated or manipulated and provides context and information about its authenticity. Images can be uploaded directly into the tool. It does not merely give a numerical probability but uses a more comprehensive approach to media verification.

You can also check this: **Fact-Checking Tools Database** ([Fact-Checking Tools Database](#)) contains over 200 fact-checking tools. It was compiled by researcher Laurence Dierickx as part of the Nordic EDMO NORDIS collaboration for fact-checkers. Some of the tools may have changed or stopped working, but it still provides a good overview of what is available.

Finally, the task is reviewed together with the whole group, going through each image one by one and answering the question.

Remember: These tools serve as a kind of help, not a perfect tool – human judgement and critical thinking is essential! Keep in mind that these tools are also constantly evolving and changing.

Note: Under no circumstances should you trust "lie detector" tools. They are not reliable.

Exercise on ethics and responsibilities

(4.1.3 Ethics and responsibilities)

Learning aim: To practice ethical and responsible decision-making when publishing images.

Choose, for example, 4–6 different images that may prompt reflection. The aim is for participants, either individually or in small groups, to consider the following questions for each image:

- What are the possible consequences if the image is published? Could publishing the image harm anyone? Does the image add value or understanding to the situation, or does it escalate it?
- Should the identity or privacy of the people in the image be protected?
- Is it possible to publish the image in an ethical and responsible way (for example by anonymising it)? Or is it impossible to publish it ethically and responsibly?

Examples of the photos could be (photos can be anything which you think may prompt feelings, thoughts and reflection – your own imagination is the limit):

- An image showing people recognisable by their faces, including children
- A situation that appears tense or conflict-prone (for example a crowd, a protest)
- A public event where people can be identified (not appearing as tense)
- An image from a war situation
- A well-known photograph from the world of photographic art or photojournalism: For example, consider the famous photograph “The Vulture and the Little Girl” by Kevin Carter (Sudan, 1993). The image shows a starving child resting on the ground while a vulture waits in the background. The photograph became a symbol of the human suffering caused by famine and poverty, and it sparked widespread international debate about both the humanitarian crisis and the ethics of photojournalism.
- An image generated by AI: For example, consider some photograph from the documentary photobook “The Book of Veles” (2021) by Norwegian photographer Jonas Bendiksen. In “The Book of Veles”, the story is set in a Macedonian village where so-called “troll factories” operate, producing fake news. Bendiksen later revealed that both the text and the images were created using artificial intelligence. The work sparked discussion about how reliable documentary photography is, and where the line lies between truth and artistic interpretation.

Finally, go through each image with students, discussing the decisions made. Discuss why some images are safer to share and others are not. You can also use a checklist to help mentioned in this chapter: ***What should be considered, particularly in regions of tension, in terms of ethics and responsibility when publishing media content?*** Also, there is more information about the ethics and responsibility related to safety issues in the Digital Safety chapter.

Remember: When teaching ethics and responsibility in media literacy, it is extremely important to allow time and space for discussion. Ethics and responsibility can be complex topics, and there are not always clear answers. **During discussions, it is essential to encourage students to always consider the potential consequences of their actions in the media: if I share this information, what effects could it have on individuals or groups of people?**

This question makes it easier to reflect on the ethical aspects of the matter.

Exercise on active citizenship and citizen journalism

(4.1.4 Active citizenship and citizen journalism)

Mobile journalism offers a practical, accessible way to strengthen media literacy in challenging learning environments. Using smartphones, young people can document their everyday realities and produce their own media content. Through mobile journalism, they develop key media literacy skills, such as source evaluation and ethical reflection.

Learning aim: To develop young people's critical thinking skills by exploring their local environment creatively, while fostering confidence and self-esteem, communication skills, and an understanding of multiple perspectives.

What? You can encourage young people to create a 1–3-minute video about their neighbourhood. The goal is that the video answers the question: What makes my neighbourhood special? They can film the area and, for example, interview family members or other residents. Alternatively, the video can be a photo series or even a short podcast (1–3 minutes). Since the work takes place in a tense area, it's important to address safety while completing the task.

Checklist for young people to remember while doing the task:

- Remember safety: Only film in safe places!
- Remember permissions: Ask for permission before interviews or filming.
- Remember multiple perspectives: Show different people's viewpoints.
- Remember facts and feelings: Separate opinions from facts.
- Remember technical aspects: Ensure clear audio and video.
- Remember creativity: Choose your own perspective and format (video, photos, podcast).

Finally, watch the finished products together and discuss them in an encouraging way. You can discuss about the checklist above: How have the points on the checklist been completed?

As a pedagogical method, it connects critical thinking with creative practice.

It makes media literacy both meaningful and empowering. The topic can be anything that interests young people. And remember, the idea is the most important thing – not the technical quality of the video.

And if, for example, you don't know how to make videos or podcasts on your phone, you can ask the young people to teach you or teach others – they usually know how. At the same time, they get a sense of being skilled at something important and can share that knowledge. Self-esteem grows at the same time.

Exercise on human rights (4.1.5 Human rights)

Learning aim: Students will be able to identify and critically discuss topics that deserve greater visibility in society. The exercise also strengthens students' sense of being heard and encourages their sense of agency.

This discussion can be done either as a whole group or in small groups.

First, students familiarise themselves with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and read it through. Ideally, students are assigned to read it before the lesson.

Students discuss and brainstorm in pairs or small groups:

- After reading the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Which human rights are not being upheld in my living environment? And which human rights do I think are being realised in my living environment?
- Are there any topics or groups of people that you feel are rarely represented in the media? What topics would you create media stories about? Is there something in your own living environment which deserves to be made visible in media, for example, related to the realisation of human rights?

These topics and ideas can be written down in pairs and groups.

After group work, the questions and students' ideas are reviewed and discussed.

In the end, it can be considered whether they could be developed into some kind of media stories. Would it be possible to produce a social media post, photo series, a video, a podcast, or another similar piece of content about the topic? Where do I find information about the topic? And whom could I interview? Could mobile journalism be a way to tell stories related to these topics? Once again, it is important to take responsibility and ethics into account in the production process. Also see the checklist related to exercise of mobile journalism (page 52).

Keep in mind the learning aims: consuming media critically and responsibly – and producing media critically and responsibly. As a media educator, it is also important to emphasise and remind students that the topic should be examined from many different perspectives, ensuring that as many voices as possible are heard. Also, in this discussion, it is important that students feel heard when it comes to their topics, and that the media educator is supportive and genuinely interested in the issues and ideas they raise.

Exercise on digital safety (4.1.6 Digital safety)

Learning aim: The student can identify online security and privacy risks and act safely and ethically when sharing personal data and images.

Ask about these questions for students: what should they do? And then discuss these situations together:

- You receive a message from an unknown person asking for your contact details or personal information. What should you do?
- You want to post a photo from an event you attended, but the image clearly shows your home location. What should you do?
- You see a post on social media claiming that there is a major threat in your local region, but you don't know if the information is true. What should you do?
- You want to share photos of your family or children, but you are concerned that someone could misuse them somehow. What should you do?
- Someone posts offensive messages about you or others online. Consider how to respond safely and responsibly. What should you do?

In this exercise, it is important to highlight the checklist mentioned earlier and emphasise that ethics and responsibility must always be considered in one's actions (the answers to the questions can also be found in the checklist).

Address that for every decision, it is crucial to pause, take a breath, and think calmly about what to do. It is also important to consider the safety of other people and loved ones, not just your own. As a media educator, emphasise that rapid decisions made in the heat of the moment should always be avoided when it comes to digital safety. Emotional regulation is very important in maintaining digital safety.

Exercise on tackling pedagogical challenges (4.2 Pedagogical challenges)

Learning aim: To increase motivation for studying and to understand the importance of education.

It is very important to understand that the feeling of hope starts from within everyone. In regions of tension, it is crucial to emphasise the importance of education. Education (and of course media literacy) is, in a sense, a weapon against unstable conditions and a key toward a better future and hope.

Through their own example, media educators demonstrate that education is a tool against the despair into which students may sometimes fall.

Ask your students:

- How do you see yourself in the future?
- What do you want to achieve? What are your dreams?
- What will your life be like in one, three, five or ten years?

This is where the significance of education comes into play!

Remember: It is very important to reserve plenty of time for this task. The aim is for every student to be heard as an individual and given the space to talk about their thoughts and feelings in peace. It is extremely important that every student feels heard and seen. The aim of the exercise is also to understand that studying is often the answer to a better future.



Tip for media educators: How to prepare for teaching media literacy in tense environments (4.2.2 Complexities of teaching media literacy)

While teaching in regions of tension presents unique challenges, many of these can be managed with the right preparation. This **checklist** is designed to help media educators prepare for lessons and foresee potential challenges. Check these four (4) points before starting the media literacy session:

1. **Check your own emotions:** Are you part of the same society as students? Identify your own confirmation biases, assumptions, traumas or fears to ensure they do not unconsciously affect your teaching.
2. **Choose learning materials carefully:** If a topic is highly sensitive, use examples that are geographically or historically distant. Practice on "safe ground" before moving on to current local events.
3. **Analyse how, not just what:** Instead of debating what is true or false, *analyse and teach how information is manipulated*. Discuss, for example, how algorithms and echo chambers function. This shifts the focus from personal beliefs to understanding the tools of information warfare.
4. **Trauma-informed approach:** Be prepared for a specific topic, news item, or image to trigger a "fight or flight" response in a student. Plan beforehand how you will guide the situation back to a sense of security if the tension becomes too high. For example, is a little break or changing the topic needed? Remember that learning always depends on a feeling of safety. If students feel threatened, critical thinking is biologically blocked. More information about trauma-informed pedagogy and creating a safe space for learning on page 28.

Exercise on creating a safe space for learning

(4.3.3 How to create a safe space for learning?)

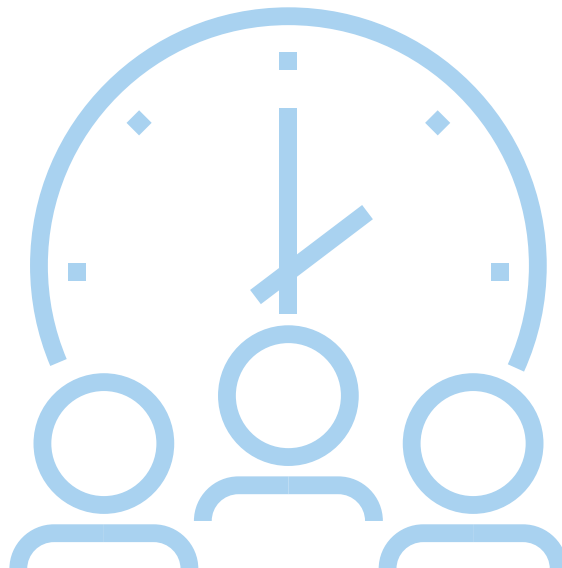
Learning aim: To learn how to listen and gain experience of being heard.

As an educator, it can sometimes be difficult to ensure that every student feels heard. However, the feeling of being heard is vital, especially in unstable environments and high-tension areas.

A useful tip is to have students do a conversation exercise (for example, on an interesting theme related to media literacy that touches upon their own lives) where their **only task is to listen to another's thoughts on a topic for three (3) minutes**.

The educator starts a timer, and for those three minutes, **one person speaks while the other only listens**.

After three minutes, they switch roles. It is crucial for the educator to emphasise that this is a listening exercise. The listener's task is to listen actively without interrupting the speaker.



Exercise on teaching methods for fragile contexts

(4.4 Teaching methods for fragile contexts)

How can we use **problem-based learning** (PBL) in context of media literacy?
This is a short example, and the topic is **fact checking**.

Learning aim: To learn to search for and evaluate information, and to use reliable sources. The learning aim is also to develop collaboration skills.

1. **First, the media educator presents students with a claim:** The media educator presents a claim that relates to the students' own environment and everyday life. If the target group is, for example, adults and the topic is fact checking, the claim could be: *"Too much screen time harms sleep and concentration."*
2. **What do we know about the topic already?** Students discuss the following questions in small groups: What do you already know about the topic? Where does this information come from? Students write down their assumptions about the topic in small groups (including any uncertainties).
3. **What do we need to find out?** Groups formulate questions related to the topic, for example: Are there any studies on the subject? Who benefits from such a claim? What do experts say? In this short example, 2–3 questions are enough.
4. **Information search:** Students look for information from news sources, research studies, social media channels, for example. They should find at least two different sources that support or challenge the claim.
5. **Evaluation:** Groups discuss and assess the sources. Is the source reliable? Is the information biased? Does it contain emotional manipulation?
6. **Solution:** Groups answer the final question: can the claim be trusted? Each group must justify their answer.
7. **Conclusion (media educator leads the discussion):** How did different groups arrive at different conclusions? Which sources were the most convincing – and why? How did social media influence perceptions?

Tip for media educators: An icebreaker at the start of every lesson (4.4 Teaching methods for fragile contexts)

What is an icebreaker? An icebreaker is a short, simple activity at the beginning of a lesson that helps students feel more safe, comfortable, engaged and ready to participate. An icebreaker usually also introduces the topic of the lesson.

Example of an icebreaker: If the subject of the day is for example **fact checking**, the media educator presents a quick statement such as:

- "Everything on social media is true."
- "If many people share the same social media post, it must be true."
- "A news headline tells you everything important."
- "It is impossible to tell when an image has been created by artificial intelligence."
- "If something seems too good to be true on social media, it is usually not true."

The educator then asks the students to show whether they agree or disagree with a thumbs up or down. This leads into a short discussion about why they chose their answer.

Remember: An icebreaker can be any short exercise or activity that introduces the topic and activates students. The icebreaker in fragile contexts can **engage different senses** (sight, hearing, moving body). The only limit is your creativity!



Tip for media educators: Choosing teaching methods (4.4 Teaching methods for fragile contexts)

When planning your media literacy lessons, think about the different types of activities you can create to actively engage students. Your imagination is the only limit.

For example, think about these questions:

- Depending on the topic: **could you create a debate activity on the topic where students take on different perspectives?** For example, you could divide the class into pairs. One student in each pair takes on **the role of defending** a statement, while the other takes the role of opposing it. Your present statements related to the topic, and the pairs discuss them according to their roles. Finally, hold a group discussion to reflect on whether the exercise helped students better understand different perspectives. (For example, if the topic is fact checking, the statement could be such as: *"It is acceptable to share information first and check its accuracy later."*)
- Depending on the topic: **could you create a role-play activity where students can act out different situations?** For example, you can create an activity where students act out a situation themselves in small groups. You could ask them to act out the possible consequences of some imaginary situation related to media literacy topics. Finally, hold a group discussion to reflect on whether the exercise helped students to better understand different perspectives and consequences of the act. (For example, if the topic is fact checking, students can act out a situation where a social media post spreads quickly without being fact-checked, resulting in misunderstandings or rumours. The media educator can create an imaginary social media post suitable for the group that evokes emotions. This example works well for a fact-checking role-play because it concretely illustrates what can happen when information is not verified.)
- Depending on the topic: **could you create an activity that could be done outdoors, in a different environment?** For example, you could come up with an activity where they gather information from other people, members of their own community – if possible. Finally, after the exercise, hold a group discussion to reflect on what they have found out and whether the exercise helped students better understand different perspectives. (For instance, if the topic is fact checking, you could create an activity where they briefly interview someone from their community related to the topic: Do they share information without fact checking? Can they recognise disinformation, or not? At the same time, students practise communication skills and information gathering.)

Tip for media educators: Check free online learning tools (4.4 Teaching methods for fragile contexts)

- Check www.mentimeter.com: Mentimeter is an interactive tool that encourages active participation by allowing students to respond to polls, quizzes and questions in real time. Mentimeter can also work very well as an icebreaker.
- Check [Flinga](#): Flinga is an online tool that allows students to actively participate in lessons by writing ideas and comments on a virtual whiteboard. It supports collaboration and group work in real time, and educators can easily monitor participation. The tool also enables clear visualisation of ideas and information, which facilitates learning and discussion. Flinga also works well as an icebreaker.

These tools can be used in both live and remote teaching.



Tip for media educators: Checklist for planning media education in regions of tension (4.4 Teaching methods for fragile contexts)

The purpose of this media educator's checklist is **to help the educator plan and implement media education as comprehensively as possible in fragile contexts**. The checklist also guides the selection of the most diverse teaching methods. By following these guidelines, media educators can't go wrong!

1. **Keep the learning environment safe and the discussion open:** The most important aim of being a media educator in a fragile context is to create a safe space for learning. The aim is to encourage students to engage in open discussions on all topics related to media literacy. More information about creating a safe space for learning in fragile contexts and trauma-informed pedagogy, p. 28.
2. **Say the learning aims aloud at the beginning of the media literacy lesson:** What are we meant to learn today? There is no need for many learning aims – 1 to 3 learning aims are usually sufficient.
3. **Use a wide range of diverse teaching methods:** It is important that the media educator does not rely on only one way of teaching, but instead combines as many different teaching methods as possible. Instruction may include independent work, but also discussion in various forms, guided group or pair discussions and work, debate exercises, or even different kinds of drama-based role-play activities. It can take many forms – the key is that teaching engages and stimulates all the senses (e.g., image, sound, text). You can assign activities that allow students to move around the space. If possible, you can also shift to a different environment. The only limit is your imagination.
4. **Make learning relevant to students' own lives:** Design activities that connect the topic to students' daily lives and personal experiences. It is important that students can explore and engage in a media environment that is familiar and meaningful to them. However, be aware that some topics may trigger strong reactions or even trauma in students. Sometimes, it is also helpful to address media literacy tools using examples that are geographically or temporally distant when necessary.
5. **Engage students in acting within their own communities:** Assign tasks or projects that allow them to act within their own communities whenever possible. For example, could students teach an aspect of media literacy in their own community?
6. **Make full use of multi-channel resources and technology:** Use a variety of media channels and formats (e.g., news articles, podcasts, documentaries, social media) to support students' media education. Technology should be employed to enhance teaching, for example through interactive apps, online learning platforms, and videos.
7. **Be flexible:** If necessary, be prepared to change your plans or switch to remote teaching! You should always have a 'plan B'.
8. **Reflect on and evaluate learning together with the students at the end:** It is important to guide students in evaluating their own learning at the conclusion of a media literacy lesson using various questions. For example: What have you learned today, and how could you apply this knowledge in your own community?

Tip for media educators: How can students evaluate their own learning? (4.4 Teaching methods for fragile contexts)

Use questions: It is important to return to the learning aims at the end of the lesson and re-state them aloud. Then, evaluate whether the aims have been achieved. Learning can be made visible through the following questions, for example. Students can first discuss these questions in pairs. After that, they can discuss the questions as a group:

1. What did I learn today? And how did I feel about my learning today?
2. What did I find most difficult or unclear? Why was it difficult or unclear?
3. What would I like to learn next?

Or use an evaluation line: Another way to assess learning is by using an evaluation line. Ask students to imagine a line: at one end it says, "**strongly agree**", and at the other end it says, "**strongly disagree**". The midpoint represents "**not sure**".

Strongly agree **Not sure** **Strongly disagree**

The media educator presents statements related to the learning and the topic, such as: "**Learning was easy today**" or "**I can use fact-checking tools after this lesson**". Students then move and position themselves physically along the line at the point that best reflects their learning.

After each statement, discuss where students have positioned themselves and how they justify their choices.



Exercise on mobile teaching and student as content creators

(4.5.2 Mobile teaching and student as content creators)

Learning aim: To learn to produce media critically and responsibly. The learning aim is also to strengthen students' sense of agency.

Remember: Check and reference the sources (Where does the information come from?). Also note the photographer, who took the photos? (Copyrights)

After doing the assignment, students can send the outcome to the teacher or the whole group via e-mail, WhatsApp or any agreed platform.

The key is to be positive and encourage students to be active and to create content about subjects they are genuinely passionate about.

- **Play journalist and tell your opinion:** What topic interests you? Is there something you're passionate about or want to make a difference on? Or what frustrates you? Write an opinion article about it and give it a headline. Imagine that your article will be published around the world. You can also read the text aloud and record it with your mobile phone (audio).
- **Play photojournalist and create a photo reportage / digital storytelling:** What topic interests you? Is there something interesting in your local environment? Or is there an interesting person living in your city or community? Or would you like to document your typical day? Take a lot of photos of the topic with your mobile phone and choose the best 4–6 photos. Take photos from as many different angles as possible, close-up and far away, from above and below etc. Write captions for the photos and give a headline for the photo reportage.
- **Magazine project:** The whole group can collaborate on a magazine project. Each person writes an article or story. Roles within the editorial team can also be assigned: for example, someone acts as the editor-in-chief, someone as the editor and proofreader, someone as the illustrator, etc. The magazine is given its own name, and the theme of the magazine can be decided together. The magazine can also include audio and video, for example.

Tips and exercises from chapter 5:

Tip for media educators: How to plan community project related to media literacy in your own community?

First define the key elements of the community project:

- **Target group:** What could be the target group for a project in my community in regions of tension? Could it be children, young people – or maybe old people? What about people with special needs? Which gender? Could girls or women be especially included? What about parents of children? Could the project involve different generations, old people and children?
- **Topic:** Which topics are relevant to the target group? Which are the special needs of the target group? Could it be fact checking, digital security, ethics of journalism or what could it be? Is it a good idea to ask the target group directly about what they would like to learn?
- **Learning aim(s):** What is the target group expected to learn about media literacy? Would it mean for example that community members learn to use fact-checking tools and identify misinformation or what could it be? One (1) learning aim is enough, but a maximum of three (3) learning aims is recommended. Other things learned through the project, in addition to the learning aim or aims, are a bonus.
- **Method of implementation:** Start with the topic, target group, and learning aim or aims first. Then plan how the project will be implemented. Could it be some kind of workshop about the media literacy topic? Some kind of social media campaign – or what could it be? Could it be organised outside or inside? What are the community members especially interested in, and could this be utilised in the project? Your imagination is the only limit!
- **Evaluation:** What did I learn during the project? What was the most interesting thing or things during the process? What was challenging during the process? How did I manage the challenge or challenges? How did the group collaboration go? What was my role in the group?

"At its best, media literacy can give an experience of empowerment and hope in difficult living conditions.

*People feel that they can make a difference,
and are not just victims of circumstances.*

*It can provide the sense that people's voice and
the voice of the community are heard."*

How can media literacy skills be strengthened in the midst of conflict and social tensions? And can media literacy help people to understand one another in times of conflict?

This guide offers knowledge and practical tools for adults to learn and teach media literacy in areas affected by conflict and social tensions.

The guide is intended as a practical tool for community practitioners, NGO staff, teachers, journalists and all active citizens who wish to strengthen critical thinking and the responsible use of information in challenging circumstances, and who may also wish to teach media literacy to others.