

CONCEPT NOTE (*draft*)

Global Media and Information Literacy Week 2018

24-31 October

and its Feature Events

The Eighth Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue Conference and the Youth Agenda Forum

Feature Conference: Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania, October 24-25, 2018

Youth Forum: The University of Latvia, Riga, October 26, 2018

Theme: MIL Cities: Voices, power, and change makers

About Global MIL Week

Global MIL Week, commemorated annually, is a major occasion for stakeholders to review and celebrate the progress achieved towards “MIL for all”. It is a cap and aggregator for MIL-related events and actions across the world leading up to this Week. Together with its Feature Events, Global MIL Week calls for local events around the world to promote MIL connections across disciplines and professions. These include intergovernmental organizations, education institutions, technological intermediaries, development organizations, associations, NGOs, research groups, educators, media professionals, library and information professionals, policy makers, regulators, and practitioners around the globe.

Rationale

What is MIL City?

Cities around the world have benefitted hugely from the digital revolution. Information about transportation, health care, entertainment, news, the private sector, civil society, and government has increased efficiency, opened up new economic, social and cultural possibilities, reduced pollution, and enhanced transparency and participation. A growing number of stakeholders are championing “smart cities” initiatives, which seek to make better use of information and communication technology to boost efficiency and quality of life in respect to security, health, recreation, community services, and government to citizens interaction and vice versa. Initiatives concerning smart cities often underplay citizens’ agency¹ in the process. One example is in relation to creatively and transparently integrating information, technology, and media in city and

¹ In Information, media, and urban inclusion by Guy Berger, Jane, Duncan, Cynthia Patricia Cantero Pacheco (2017). Unpublished paper.

community life to enable people's understanding and engagement in realizing tolerance and human solidarity as well in election processes. City managers and residents are hindered without access to information. It, therefore, behooves cities to recognize the need for comprehensive info-coms policies, which address digital and non-digital dimensions including media and information literacy².

Moreover, many studies suggest that when people have access to information, including social networks, it can increase levels of social capital. People are, then, better connected, better able to build networks and find opportunities or to create their own businesses. They are better able to participate in and make informed decisions about democratic and development processes.

Through MIL Cities, the evolving concept of Smart Cities are fortified. A "smart city" needs faster cables or powerful transmitters, open and inclusive technological platforms, and more. To be truly sustainable, smart cities must also be MIL Cities. Furthermore, competent, confident and responsible producers and users of information, digital innovation, and online media need connectivity and more. To create such a 'smart' community, people must acquire the competencies (that is, knowledge, skills, and attitudes) necessary to navigate the complex and permanently changing social and technological networks. By helping societies to think and act in a more critical and reflective way, we can set ourselves on the road to positive and sustainable change.

The need for action is pressing. Too often, talk of fake news³, misinformation, alternative facts, propaganda, selective history, post-truth reality, intolerance, radicalization etc. overshadows the benefits of having more access to information, technology, and media. The case must be made for broadening people's horizons and giving them the tools to navigate the media and information environment in which they live, wherever there is the talk of censorship or drastic restrictions on access to information.

This year's edition

Global MIL Week 2018 will highlight that smart, sustainable cities must also be media and information literate cities (*MIL Cities*). MIL Cities put people at their heart by helping everyone, through creative means, throughout their lifetimes, develop the competencies required to make the most of media, information, and technology. They enable citizens to make better use of the practical possibilities a connected city can provide, and engage more creatively, critically and effectively in it. Such actions advance the achievement of **SDG 11**, *Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*; **SDG 4**, *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*; **SDG 5**, *Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women*; and **SDG 16**, *Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*.

With this in mind, what is needed for the global community to join hands to promote universal, user-centered media and information literacy, bridging the three interrelated sets of competencies - information, media, and technology? Who, in cities, are the "change brokers" or changemakers for this to happen? What innovative steps could be taken to promote MIL across cities, especially in communal areas? Who are the key stakeholders in realizing media and information literate cities?

A priority is to find new and better creative approaches to Media and Information Literacy (MIL) education in cities. We need also to find ways to increase its impact, sustainably, by building bridges between the existing community (civil society actors, libraries, academics and educators)

² ibid

³ UNESCO prefers to use the term disinformation as if the information is fake then it is not news.

and other stakeholders in cities who have power and responsibility to effect change on MIL (policy-makers, private sector, media and communication industry, international development organizations and active citizens).

Even though there are positive examples of networking activities and partnerships in MIL across countries, a systematic and comprehensive multi-stakeholders approach towards MIL remains a challenge on cities. It is therefore important to reconsider and explore the roles and responsibilities of change makers or “change brokers” who can be catalytic agents to expand MIL for all, as well exploring multi-stakeholder collaboration.

For example, public policy-makers in both cities and national authorities can do more to underpin systematic initiatives to reach more people with MIL competencies, and so empower citizens to appropriate the benefits of technology, information, and media while managing the challenges.

Municipalities and their policy-makers are centers of power. They often influence over learning and education programmes in their cities. Cities are also catalysts for social and civic participation, including critical engagement in elections. They will benefit from a population that is not confused, fooled, or put off by the complex operation of relevant industries (communication and media companies, ICT, advertising, film industries, gaming sector, content industries, etc.). MIL can ensure that digital opportunities translate into the achievement of policy goals on education, health, and broader social development. They should be partners in promoting MIL.

Media organizations are vital agents of change in city life. They are still not sufficiently involved in MIL education, even though they have the potential and capacity to educate people about MIL. Media and information literate societies, a necessity if we are to defend freedom of expression, are also in the interest of media organizations. Moreover, by giving people the confidence to get online and use the possibilities available also benefits businesses and other actors using the Internet to sell goods and services.

Global Media and Information Literacy Week 2018 (October 24-31) will, therefore, celebrate media and information literacy and intercultural dialogue with the aim to innovate MIL in cities while revitalizing global, regional and local partnerships for sustainable MIL development and informed citizenry in inclusive and sustainable knowledge societies. The GAPMIL Global MIL Awards will be a standard feature of the Week. Close to 100 events around the world celebrated Global MIL Week 2017. In this 2018 edition, more is anticipated.

Feature Conference

24-25 October, 2018, Kaunas, Lithuania

UNESCO and UNAOC lead the MIL Global Week 2018 in partnership with the MILID University Network, the Global Alliance for Partnership on MIL (GAPMIL), the International Federation of Library Associations, the International Association of School Libraries, and many other partners. The Global MIL Week Feature Conference and Youth Agenda Forum are co-organized with and hosted by Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania) and University of Latvia. These main events will also celebrate an important milestone – the 100th anniversary of independence for the Baltic States - Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

The Feature Conference will bring together MIL stakeholders from all over the world and foster collaboration between the Baltic, Nordic and other regions of the world. The three-day programme, to be held on October 24-26, 2018, will feature panels, roundtable discussions, and workshops on different topics. The conference will also include many additional events, such as keynote talks by leading scholars and major stakeholders, evening receptions, film screenings, exhibits, and tours.

The Department of Public Communications of Vytautas Magnus University will host the Feature Conference that will take place in Kaunas, Lithuania.

The UNESCO Chair on MIL at the University of Latvia will host the Youth Agenda Forum that will take place in Riga, Latvia on 26 October.

Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) has developed a strong profile in academic research and outreach activities since its re-establishment in 1989. VMU is the only higher education institution in the country and one of the few in the region, where a wide liberal arts education is imparted. Acclaimed for its international cooperation, VMU is networking with universities, academics and other partners around the world.

The Department of Public Communications at VMU has a 20-year-long history of advancing media and communication research and journalism studies. Its reputation runs on strong academic capacity and rich experience in research, education, training and evidence-based policy-making. The department is known for its networking activities relating to MIL and has established close working connections with other departments and institutions nationally and internationally.

The University of Latvia, founded in 1919, is the largest university in Latvia. It has 13 faculties and 20 research institutes offering more than 130 accredited study programs in a range of natural and social sciences as well as humanities. The University of Latvia has more than 15 000 students; it has accumulated vast experience in the preparation and implementation of national and international research projects. In 2015, the University Of Latvia Faculty Of Social Sciences, through the Department of Communication Studies, established the UNESCO Chair on Media and Information Literacy. Its mission is to conduct research, develop educational activities and policy guidelines in the MIL sphere for different target groups – policy-makers, educators, families, the private sector – as well as to develop study programs, trainings and practical materials for MIL mediators (teachers, librarians) and young people to promote their competencies in media and information literacy.

Proposed sub-themes

1. MIL Cities as creative and engaged communities for the sustainable development goals
2. MIL enabling civic engagement in city elections
3. Uniting power: Roles and responsibilities of key city actors in MIL (policymakers, educators, civil society organizations, academics)
4. MIL relevant industries as changemakers for MIL cities (communication agencies, media outlets, technological intermediaries, film industries, gaming sector, content industries, etc.)
5. Engagement in MIL movement as corporate social responsibility
6. Training and capacity-building for future MIL cities
7. Public policy discourses in MIL, algorithm, and automation in journalism and media production
8. MIL and news in the era of algorithms
9. Youth, Social media activism and change makers
10. Defining identities, privacy management, crime and cyberbullying in the (dis)connecting digital universe
11. Programming, artificial intelligence, surveillance, and virtual reality: Strengthening impact of digital environments with MIL
12. Hate speech and radicalization in public space
13. Propaganda, misinformation/disinformation, and persuasive technologies
14. Cultural and linguistic barriers to communication: MIL enabling contact between people on and off the web

15. MIL to build smart, secure, tolerant, and socially inclusive cities
16. Revitalizing city libraries, museums, and archives through creative MIL actions
17. Let the voices be heard: empowering active, resilient, engaged communities through MIL
18. MIL in the workplace
19. MIL Partnerships for education
20. Evolution of peoples' information needs throughout their lives in cities
21. Better city governance: MIL as e-governance participation and learning
22. MIL as a tool to build trust in media in cities
23. Using MIL to bridge cultural industries with grassroots city life
24. MIL as "stoplights" in cities: Meaning-making in music
25. Imagining city transportation and healthcare systems that stimulate MIL education
26. Stimulating entrepreneurship in cities through MIL
27. Theorizing MIL cities with a people focus: Reflections on the Five Laws of MIL

Youth Agenda Forum

26 October, 2018, Riga, Latvia

The young generation of today make more and longer use of the internet than ever. They also start at an earlier age, use an ever-growing range of technological platforms and access the internet in more locations than ever before. Meanwhile, youngsters (as digital natives) can be highly self-confident and independent from their parents and educators in their attitudes towards the internet. Young people often devise their own strategies to solve whatever issues they may come across on the internet.

However, one of the main task that remains is the need to improve investments in digital media and information literacy among the young. This strategy is necessary to create the human capital to enable success and sustainability in a technology-driven world. "The gap between a vision of interconnected learning and the reality of education today is wide, and research and policy initiatives are needed to provide education that will prepare youth for basic needs in a technologically driven future⁴". A more sustainable approach is to combine technological training, including programming, with other softer critical information and media competencies.

Youth has been defined as a specific target group in UNESCO's agenda for the coming years and was the subject of a UNESCO Operational Strategy (2014-2021). Their potential as agents of change has been reflected in paragraph 7 of these guidelines: "UNESCO will apply a comprehensive and future-oriented vision recognizing youth as agents of change, social transformations, peace and sustainable development. Such vision embodies the ways in which youth are concerned or affected by UNESCO's work: as beneficiaries of services and activities; as independent actors; as partners through their organizations. The work on youth will allow them to (i) capitalize on their creativity, knowledge, innovation and potential to drive change; (ii) address challenges affecting their development, both at governance and societal levels; and (iii) reach the unreached and those who have lost a sense of community and hope in the future⁵."

It is from this perspective that the Global MIL Week Youth Forum in Riga will address how young people can act to become change-makers in favor of improved MIL Cities in the era of smart cities. First, what can they do as "agents in their own right"? Moreover, what can they do as young digital media and information professionals? As young researchers? As internet micro-celebrities and influencers? As young librarians? Can youth help to bridge the gap between the grand vision of

⁴ http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/140/Supplement_2/S122.full.pdf

⁵ UNESCO Operational Strategy on youth for 2014-2021, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002271/227150e.pdf>

MIL learning, and the reality of education? Can they influence policy-making (for example on platform regulation or data protection), and if so where (Cities?) In addition, how? Do they feel strong and motivated enough to negotiate with the private sector – social networks, other Internet actors, advertisers – about their responsibilities to users and wider society? What action can they take to respond to intolerance online? Are youth sufficiently connected and can they afford connectivity? Finally yet importantly, are young people ready and motivated to help their younger peers and siblings in digital media and information environment?

The Youth Agenda Forum will include a youth competition and awards.

Expected Participants at the Feature Events

1. City officials and policymakers: including national, regional and global players
2. Networks of mayors
3. Networks of smart cities
4. Networks of creative cities
5. Associations of election officials
6. Voter education associations and knowledge networks
7. City library networks
8. City museums
9. Academic: researchers focusing on youth media practices, young researchers
10. The United Nations and other international development organizations
11. MIL related industries, private sector: information & communication (Google, YouTube, Facebook, Ten Cent, Weibo, VK, Taringa etc.), news media, advertising and PR agencies, research companies, music streaming and video-on-demand services (Netflix, Spotify), digital devices & software producers (Apple, Samsung), mobile operators, internet providers
12. Educators: formal & non-formal education institution, libraries
13. Youth: youth organizations, students from related study programs (media and communication, IT, advertising, PR, psychology etc.)
14. Young professionals: representatives from the field of the digital media, including news media, digital advertising/media agencies, IT - young programmers, new librarians etc.
15. Youth leaders in the United Nations and other international development organizations as well as connecting their programmes/projects
16. Social media influencers: digital / video content creators, micro-celebrities, bloggers, vloggers, e-sports gamers etc.
17. Digital/video content creators, micro-celebrities, bloggers, vloggers, e-sports gamers etc.
18. Safe internet organizations
19. Information and media professionals
20. Formal & non-formal educators and libraries
21. Media and other information providers in cities
22. MIL-related NGOs
23. Religious associations
24. City tourist agencies and hoteliers
25. Stakeholders of city planning, security, entertainment, health, transportation, and housing