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The Encyclopedia of Media Literacy

IRELAND

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Brian O'Neill is a researcher on media literacy, media policy and information society issues. He is a member of EU Kids Online network and part of the COST Action ISO 906 *Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies*. He was co-author of the report *Media literacy and the public sphere: a contextual study for public media literacy promotion in Ireland* for the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.

I. Overview

1. Ireland

2. What is the status of media literacy in your country?

Media literacy education in Ireland despite being under-resourced and relatively new to the public policy arena, builds on a long tradition and a solid foundation of critical engagement, creative activity and practical implementation. From a traditional position of protectionism in Irish cultural and educational policy, media literacy has rapidly moved to embrace new opportunities for greater participation and creative endeavour.

Many of the first institutions active in media literacy promotion were established by the Catholic Church in the mid part of the 20th century: the National Film Institute (1945) and the Catholic Communications Centre (1968) were established by the conservative Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, to ensure that Catholic social teaching would prevail in use of modern media. Educational philosophies, insofar as they dealt with media literacy matters, were thoroughly protectionist in approach, seeking to inoculate against "the flood of information stimuli and exhortations conveyed by sound and image by which the pupil is assailed outside the school through posters, cinema, television, strip cartoons, radio and popular songs" (Primary Curriculum Handbook, 1971).

Media literacy gained a strong foothold in Ireland in the 1980s with the introduction of new elements into curriculum, the establishment of an education department within the Irish Film Institution and exposure to many international developments (from the UK) in media studies and media education. Media literacy is now formally part of the English language curriculum and a component of the national primary curriculum. In addition, digital literacy skills receive a high priority in schools with investment in training and resources to ensure schools are at the forefront of Information Society dvelopment. Practical skills feature in many schools and a Department of Education sponsored initiative to introduce filmmaking for primary school children (the project

called Fís, meaning vision in the Irish language) has proved extremely successful and popular.

The most important recent development in media literacy has been its inclusion in the terms of the Broadcasting Act 2009, giving the regulator, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), the ancillary function of promoting media literacy. In keeping with European trends whereby media literacy has been seen as an essential component of a participatory and democratic culture, Ireland is seeking to promote a greater understanding of media literacy issues through a multi stakeholder approach of encouraging industry, national broadcasting, community media, civil society organizations and education to work together. The community media movement has been particularly successful in this regard offering accredited training programmes and media opportunities for citizens in both radio and television. The BAI has also included media literacy as a category in its production funding scheme, Sound and Vision, enabling producers to target media literacy education as a recognized topic of broadcast content. Under the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, the European Commission will commence reporting on levels of media literacy across Europe from 2011. Preliminary data suggests Ireland will be in the middle tier of European countries for media literacy and reports on media literacy levels will be used to guide further interventions in the field.

3. Please list any national media literacy programs.

Primary: Media literacy is incorporated in the Social Personal and Health Education strand of the national primary curriculum.
Secondary: Media literacy is a component of Cultural Literacy in the English curriculum Junior Certificate level, and as a film studies option at the senior level within English. A transition year programme also offers schools extensive scope for introducing elective media studies elements.

II. Notable Media Literacy Organizations

1. Name of media literacy organization:

Broadcasting Authority of Ireland
www.bai.ie
The BAI is the independent regulator for radio and television in Ireland. Established under the Broadcasting Act 2009, it has the ancillary function of promoting media literacy. It operates the Sound and Vision production funding scheme which offers media literacy as one of its programme categories.

Irish Film Institute
http://www.ifi.ie/
The Irish Film Institute traces its origins back to 1945 when it was established as the National Film Institute to promote film appreciation in Ireland. The Education

Department (IFI Education) of the Irish Film Institute provides the opportunity for appreciation and critical interaction with film by a wide constituency both within and outside the formal education sector. It offers a range of evening courses open to the general public as well as courses and events designed specifically for specialised interest groups.

National Centre for Technology in Education – NCTE
www.ncte.ie
The National Centre for Technology in Education is an Irish Government agency established to provide advice, support and information on the use of information and communications technology (ICT) in education.

Fís – Digital Media for All
www.fis.ie
FÍS - Film in Schools is a resources and professional development programme for teachers and a film festival for young filmmakers in primary classes. The programme encourages the teacher to incorporate and integrate film into the curriculum across all the subject areas.

III. References and further reading

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