Albanian Media Institute
Instituti Shqiptar i Medias

May, 2026

MIL in Albanian Pre-University Education

Understanding, Integration, Impact & Challenges

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MIL in Albanian Pre-University Education:

Understanding, Integration, Impact and Challenges

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I. Executive summary

This report presents the findings of study on the integration of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) into the pre-university education system in Albania and is conducted in the framework of the Project Building Trust in Media in South East Europe: Support to Journalism as a Public Good". The study covers the period of active MIL integration in formal education and is supported with data from a survey of 623 teachers and professional network leaders, as well as qualitative evidence gathered through 2 Focus Group discussions with 18 teachers and school directors from lower and upper secondary education.

The results indicate that MIL integration has made substantial progress across both lower and upper secondary education. The overwhelming majority of respondents (95%) report a satisfactory to high level of conceptual clarity regarding MIL. A comparable proportion demonstrate confidence in applying MIL methodologies in their classrooms, and 74% report using media sources at least once or twice per week as part of their regular teaching practice. Teachers across subjects, including mathematics, chemistry, biology, history, Albanian language, English, ICT, physical education and arts describe concrete, pedagogically sound applications of MIL, ranging from source verification exercises to structured debates and content creation activities.

The impact on students is consistently reported as positive. Teachers observe increased engagement, greater informational autonomy, improved ability to identify disinformation, and stronger critical thinking habits. Focus group participants describe qualitative shifts in student behavior, including a higher degree of responsibility in sourcing, more motivated participation in group activities, and growing self-confidence in presenting and debate skills.

At the same time, the findings show persistent structural and systemic challenges that constrain more consistent and ambitious implementation. Insufficient technological infrastructure, including unreliable internet access and limited availability of devices, remains the most frequently cited obstacle, affecting nearly half of all respondents (47%). Time pressure resulting from curriculum density, the absence of ready-made and verified digital resources tailored to specific subjects, and uneven teacher preparation also feature prominently among the identified challenges.

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as an educational concern is a defining feature of this reporting period. Majority (96%) of respondents consider understanding and ethically implementing AI in education very important, yet teacher's express significant uncertainty about how to integrate AI tools in a pedagogically sound and responsible manner. AI literacy has become an immediate and urgent area requiring structured policy and pedagogical response.

The report concludes with a set of recommendations oriented towards consolidating the achievements of MIL integration while addressing the conditions necessary for its sustainable and equitable expansion across the Albanian pre-university system.

II. Introduction

2.1 The Global Case for MIL in Formal Education

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) has been defined by UNESCO as a set of competencies that empower citizens to *access, evaluate* and *use information critically* across the full range of media and information providers (UNESCO, 2013). UNESCO's MIL Curriculum for Teachers establishes the three-domain framework*, access, critical analysis* and *creative production*, that builds the pedagogical approach to integrate MIL in education. Meanwhile, Media and Information Literate Citizens: Think Critically, Click Wisely (UNESCO, 2021), extends the model to address artificial intelligence, digital citizenship, disinformation and online hate speech.

The case for integration of MIL within compulsory education is reinforced by recent data. UNESCO's 2025 Issue Brief, *"Media and Information Literacy for All: Closing the Gaps",* confirms that countries with dedicated national MIL policies integrated across education and society are better positioned to build resilient, critically informed citizenries than those addressing MIL only within broader digital strategies. The scale of the challenge is underscored by the finding that 85% of citizens globally are worried about online disinformation, and that two thirds of digital content creators do not systematically fact-check information before sharing it (UNESCO/IPSOS, 2023). In this context, schools are identified as the most effective and equitable mechanism for reaching entire generations with MIL competencies.

2.2 The Albanian Context and MIL

In Albania, the relevance of MIL is sharpened by both the policy landscape and the state of pupils learning. Prior to 2021, the country had no dedicated national policy on MIL, and existing strategic documents focused primarily on digital skills rather than on critical engagement with media and information (AMI, 2018; AMI, 2024). Significant progress has since been made at the policy level: in 2024, the Ministry of Education and Sports revised the national Curriculum Framework with an explicit emphasis on digital competencies, and the National Digital Agenda for Education 2025–2030, approved by the Council of Ministers in December 2025, sets out six strategic objectives spanning digital infrastructure, teacher digital competency, updated curricula and multi-stakeholder engagement (Council of Ministers, 2025).

The urgency and importance of MIL interventions is reinforced by evidence on pupils learning. In PISA 2022, Albanian 15-year-olds scored 358 in reading, 368 in mathematics and 376 in science, well below the OECD averages of 476, 472 and 485 respectively (OECD, 2023a). In creative thinking, a domain closely associated with the analytical and productive dimensions of MIL, Albanian students averaged 13 out of 60 points against an OECD average of 33, placing them among the lowest performers globally (OECD, 2023b). Since the adult literacy rate stands at 98.5% (World Bank, 2022), the challenge is not basic literacy but the higher-order reading, reasoning and creative capacities demanded by contemporary civic and professional life, precisely the competencies MIL is designed to strengthen.

2.3 The systemic intervention in formal education

It is within this global and national context that the project "Building Trust in Media in South East Europe: Support to Journalism as a Public Good" has, since 2016, been the principal vehicle for introducing MIL in formal education in Albania. Implemented by the Albanian Media Institute (AMI) in partnership with the Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education (ASCAP), and supported by UNESCO and the European Union, the project has been implemented in three successive phases. Phase 1 (2016–2019) focused on awareness-raising, stakeholder mapping and the early adaptation of UNESCO MIL resources to the Albanian context. Phase 2 (2019–2022) marked the first systematic effort to introduce MIL into formal education: AMI and ASCAP co-developed a MIL curriculum for grades 6–9 and 10–12 adapted from the UNESCO model, piloted it in 20 schools across four cities, trained 240 teachers, and initiated the accreditation of the MIL teacher training modules (UNESCO, 2023).

The current Phase 3 (2023–2026), within which this report is produced, aimed to scale up integration across a broader network of schools and to consolidate teacher capacity at the system level, with training modules updated to include an explicit focus on Artificial Intelligence in education (UNESCO, 2026). Between September 2023 and June 2025, AMI and ASCAP organised 48 training sessions targeting 720 national trainers in secondary education from across the Regional Directorates of Pre-University Education. The project is directly aligned with Objectives 4 and 5 of the National Digital Agenda for Education 2025–2030, which commit to expanding training for all teachers and to updating the curriculum and competencies across all levels of the pre-university system.

2.4 Purpose and Objectives of the Research

This research report collects evidence and assesses the results achieved through MIL integration in Albanian pre-university schools. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Evaluate the degree to which teachers have acquired and are applying MIL knowledge, skills and methodologies in their classrooms;
- Assess the impact of MIL integration on students' critical thinking, informational competencies and engagement;
- Identify the main challenges that constrain more consistent and ambitious implementation;
- Examine teachers' perceptions and current practices regarding AI literacy and its integration into education.

III. Methodology

3.1 Method

The report follows a methodological approach that combines quantitative and qualitative research methods. This combination was chosen in order to provide both a statistically representative overview of MIL integration across the schools involved in the project, and an in-depth understanding of how teachers experience, interpret, and apply MIL in their specific classroom contexts. The quantitative component supports the identification of trends and patterns, while the qualitative component provides explanatory depth and illustrative examples that bring the data to life.

3.2 Sampling

For the purposes of the research, we followed a non-probability sampling approach. The selection criteria for the survey were that the participants had to be either teachers active in lower or upper secondary education, or Professional Network Leaders who had completed MIL training courses as part of the project. The questionnaire was disseminated to a total of 720 eligible participants, of whom 623 responded, reaching a response rate of approximately 87%.

While for Focus Groups, participants were purposively selected to ensure coverage across a variety of subjects taught in the pre-university system, so that the qualitative data would reflect the diversity of subject-specific applications and challenges rather than being limited to any one disciplinary area.

3.3 Data gathering process and instruments

Quantitative data were gathered through an online survey, while qualitative data through Focus Group discussions. The data were collected during February – April 2026. The target respondents were teachers and teacher trainers that had been part of capacity building trainings organized in the frame of the Project during 2023 – 2025.

3.2.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed by the research team in close consultation with the Albanian Media Institute and the Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education. It was designed to measure: (a) the degree of conceptual understanding of MIL and its methodological components; (b) the frequency and nature of MIL integration into teaching practice; (c) the observed impact on students; (d) the main challenges encountered; and (e) teachers' perceptions of the importance and current use of AI in education.

To make it accessible and to increase response rate, it was disseminated online through Google Forms. The link was distributed through the existing project communication channels, including the network of Professional Network Leaders and the school coordinators who had participated in the training cycles. Responses were collected during February – March 2026.

3.2.2 Focus Groups

Qualitative data were gathered through Focus Group (FG) discussions. In total two FGs were conducted with 18 participants from lower and upper secondary education. The FGs were organized on April 22nd and April 23rd, 2026 and each lasted 90 minutes. In terms of subject, participants included teachers of English, Albanian language, history and citizenship, chemistry, biology, mathematics, physics, and ICT. The FGs followed a semi-structured guide and covered teachers' personal understanding and application of MIL, observable changes in student behaviour and competencies, the challenges of implementation, and perspectives on AI in education. The discussions were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

3.3 Data analysis

Quantitative data were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and cumulative percentages, to identify the main trends in MIL understanding, integration, and impact. The analysis focused on the proportion of respondents reporting high or satisfactory levels for each indicator, as well as the distribution of responses across the full scale.

Qualitative data from the focus group were analysed thematically. Following transcription, the data were coded and organised into categories corresponding to the main themes of the study: MIL understanding and application across subjects, impact on students, challenges, and AI literacy. Selected quotes are used throughout the findings section to illustrate and substantiate the quantitative trends.

3.4 Limitations

A key limitation of this study is that both instruments rely on self-reported perceptions of participants rather than direct observation of classroom practice or independent assessment of student outcomes.

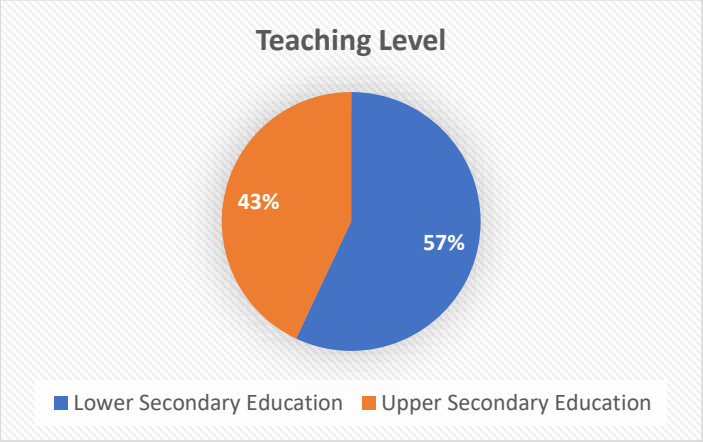
IV. Key findings

4.1 Profile of respondents

In total 623 participants completed the online questionnaire, out of which the majority (56%) were Professional Network Leaders, and the remaining (44%) were teachers.

The majority of participants (57%) were teaching in lower secondary education, and the rest (43%) in upper secondary education, indicating broad coverage across both levels of the pre-university system.

This distribution ensures that the findings reflect both the strategic and institutional perspective, as well as the direct experience of classroom practice.

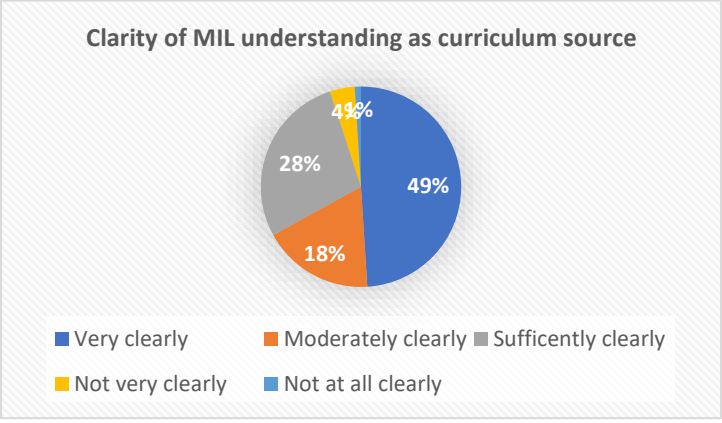


While 18 participants in FGs were equally divided between lower and upper secondary education, but covering subjects such as: Albanian language and literature, mathematics, ICT, chemistry, biology, physics, civic education. In terms of gender all participants were females, while in terms of age it varied from 30 – 58 years old.

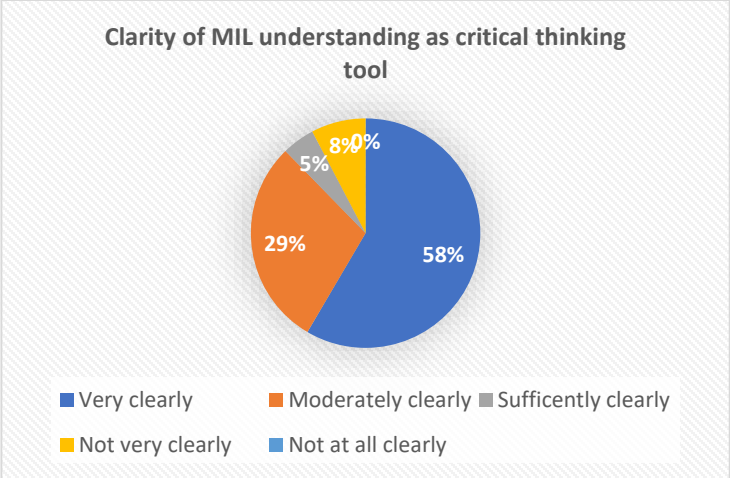
4.2 MIL understanding and application

MIL is a complex and comprehensive concept, and a sufficient degree of conceptual clarity is a prerequisite for its meaningful integration across subjects and curricula.

The survey results indicate that the project has achieved a high and consistent level of MIL conceptualization among participants. Across all five indicators measuring the degree of knowledge and methodological acquisition, over 90% of respondents report a satisfactory or high level of understanding and competence, suggesting that the training provided has established a solid and broadly shared foundation.



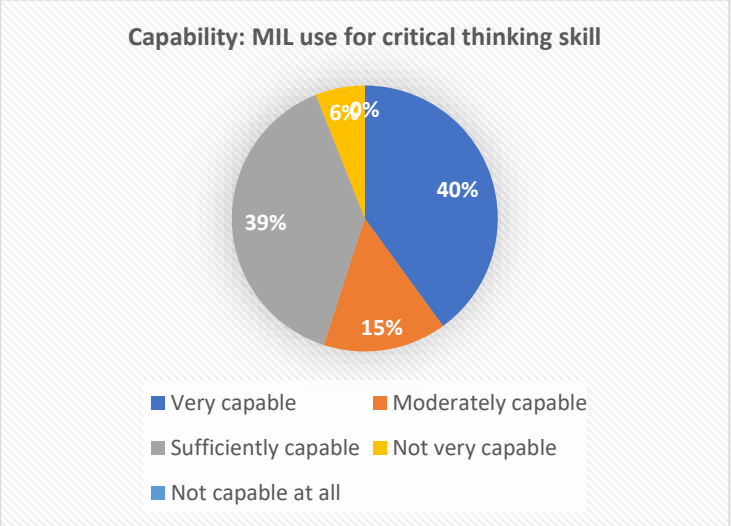
Specifically, 95% of respondents report a clear or very clear understanding of MIL as an additional curricular resource, and the same proportion report clarity regarding MIL as an instrument for developing higher-order thinking skills, including the ability to analyze, evaluate, handle controversial issues, and recognize disinformation.



Equally, 94% report feeling sufficiently or very capable of applying media and information sources in this latter function, reflecting a high degree of professional self-confidence in one of the more demanding aspects of MIL pedagogy.

"We have been avant-garde with our efforts to integrate MIL in formal education. When we started five years ago, MIL was not that popular. But today? It is fundamental and more than ever applicable and necessary."

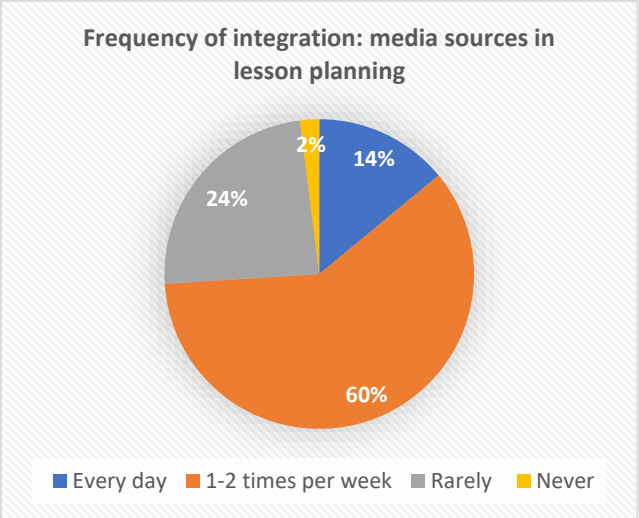
A.Z, Teacher



These results are particularly significant given the breadth of subjects and school levels represented in the sample. The sustained exposure to MIL through training and piloting activities has not only increased familiarity with the terminology but has also shifted how teachers conceptualize and approach their practice, a change that is a necessary condition for durable curricular integration.

4.3 MIL integration and main topics

On the other hand, the frequency of MIL integration into teaching practice is equally encouraging. 74% of respondents report using media sources in lesson planning at least once or twice per week, and a further 14% do so on a daily basis. Only 1% report never using media sources, suggesting that MIL has moved from a project-specific practice to a broadly internalized part of the teaching and learning process.



The topics for which MIL is most frequently used as a curricular resource reflect both the social and interdisciplinary character of the approach. Media and Information Literacy topics itself ranks first (23%), followed by history (13%), environment and climate change (15%), and natural sciences (12%).

When used as a tool for developing higher-order thinking skills, digital technology and AI dominates (22%), followed by media literacy and critical thinking (16%), and history, politics, and citizenship (13%). These patterns indicate that MIL is no longer restriced to humanities and social science subjects but has expanded into the sciences and into the increasingly significant terrain of digital and AI literacy.

	Main Topic	Percentage 100%	Main Topics	Percentage 100%
1	Environment and climate change	15%	Media literacy & critical thinking (verification, disinformation, debate)	16%
2	History	13%	Digital technology & AI (internet, social networks, chatbots)	22%
3	Democracy and citizenship	10%	Environment & climate (pollution, biodiversity, energy)	8%

4	Media and media education	23%	History, politics & citizenship (democracy, EU, wars)	13%
5	Health and well-being	4%	Language & literature (reading, writing, texts)	9%
6	Natural sciences	12%	Mathematics & statistics (graphs, data, equations)	3%
7	Mathematics and statistics	3%	Physics & engineering (force, light, circuits)	4%
8	Language and literature	10%	Chemistry & laboratory science (reactions, pH, periodic table)	3%
9	Culture, Art and Music	4%	Biology & health (vaccines, nutrition, body)	3%
10	Technology and Innovation	5%	Arts, culture & sports (music, visual arts, PE)	3%
11	No answer / unclear	2%	Other / general	15%

The focus group provides important complementary evidence on how MIL is understood and applied in practice. Teachers describe a consistent set of core practices: guiding students to search information from multiple and verified sources rather than relying on a single input; training students to distinguish between reliable and unreliable information; encouraging the attribution of sources and the citation of authors; and developing students' capacity to process and present information in their own words rather than reproducing it from the textbooks. These practices align closely with the three-level MIL framework around which teachers were trained, accessing and verifying information, critical analysis, and creative content production.

> ***"What I as a teacher require from the very beginning is the source of the information. I ask pupils where you got it, who is the author, how true is this information and how it stands compared to other versions of the same story?".***
>
> ***M.P, Teacher***

Participants emphasize that the very nature of the media environment that pupils inhabit has shifted substantially even over the course of the project. Television and Facebook, once the dominant reference points for school-age users, have been largely displaced among the current cohort by Instagram and

TikTok, with algorithmic content selection and influencer-driven trends now occupying the largest share of young people's attention. Teachers describe this acceleration as the principal reason why MIL cannot be addressed as a one-off topic but must be integrated throughout the curriculum where pupils are taught to apply not one but several layers of verification before taking the information as reliable.

> ***" The percentage of use of Instagram and TikTok has increased. I believe these platforms are widely used now. We have future journalists, future lawyers, future professionals who will take the basis from here. We try to teach them the basics of information evaluation making them reflect on the question "How should I filter it, verify it, so that it is not incorrect? This is our role to educate them filter accurate information, not with one filter, but with several filters."***
>
> ***E.L, Teacher***

Teachers also describe the subject-specific adaptations they have developed. In English, MIL is used to structure discussions on topics such as hate speech and cybersecurity, with students bringing real examples from their digital environments and engaging in debate about appropriate responses. In Albanian language and literature, MIL activities have included the creation of a class blog where students contribute creative content and respond to literary events, as well as vocabulary-building exercises that require students to consult authoritative dictionary sources. In history and citizenship, teachers describe using multiple media sources, including historical newspapers, academic texts, and documentary footage, to help students navigate politically contested or emotionally charged topics and arrive at evidence-based rather than emotion-driven judgements. In biology and chemistry, MIL is integrated primarily through the use of video simulations and digital platforms that allow students to observe experiments that cannot be conducted under normal laboratory conditions, as well as through structured debates on topics related to health, the environment, and food safety.

> ***"Using MIL has helped me to be more objective in class, which means clearly structuring the lesson plan, setting clear objectives for myself first and then for my pupils. Clarity and structure help the students benefit more from a lesson."***
>
> ***L.M, Teacher***

The history and citizenship teachers in the focus group are particularly explicit about the role of MIL in handling politically charged or emotionally loaded topics. They describe deliberately structuring lessons around the comparison of multiple sources, historical newspapers from different periods, academic publications such as those of the Academy of Sciences, documentaries and current news, in order to develop students' capacity to form evidence-based, rather than emotion-driven, judgements.

> **"For the National Liberation War, the student will find information from a newspaper of the 50th anniversary of liberation, from the history book of Albania of the 19th–20th century, and from a television documentary. The student brings the information, we discuss it all in class, and then critical thinking begins. I do this so that the student can discuss objectively,**

knowing how to analyse or argue an important historical event, but always starting from the sources, not from word-of-mouth on the streets."

J.D, Teacher

The use of interactive platforms, including Kahoot, Google Forms, and digital quiz tools, is mentioned repeatedly across the focus group as a particularly effective mechanism for increasing student engagement, enabling interactive assessment, and introducing a degree of playful competition into the learning process. Several teachers note that these tools have become a regular part of their classroom practice, valued as much for the motivation they generate as for the learning outcomes they support.

"Kahoot has become part of teaching. Almost every two or three hours, the Kahoot part is part of the lesson. The students know that these are the questions the teacher has prepared. That competitive spirit where everyone is engaged gives a lot of vitality and is a very good way for students to absorb as much as possible. Through learning, through play."

E.B, Teacher

An important finding from the focus group concerns the role of collaborative and group-based learning in the successful application of MIL. Multiple teachers report that activities organized around group work consistently show stronger outcomes than individual assignments, both in terms of the quality of the information gathered and the depth of the discussion generated. Group structures enable students with different ability levels to contribute meaningfully, allow peer mentoring to occur naturally, and create a social accountability that motivates even less confident students to participate actively.

"In a group it works much better than individually. When they are given a topic at home, not everyone participates and does the task, surely there are students who are passive. But when I divide them in groups, each group has its own leader who manages time and tasks, and they feel compelled to become part of the group. They want practice more than theory."

E.S, Teacher

An unexpected and consistently reported finding from the second focus group concerns the pedagogical effect of MIL on students with weaker academic performance or learning difficulties. Multiple teachers across subjects, chemistry, biology, physics, social sciences, describe a recurring pattern where students previously labelled as disengaged or low-performing become the first to activate in MIL-integrated lessons. Several attribute this to the fact that these students, having grown up with digital media as a primary information environment, are often more fluent than their academically stronger peers in navigating digital content, recognizing credible sources, and producing multimedia presentations. The result is a measurable improvement in classroom engagement and, in some cases, in formal assessment outcomes.

"Those students that I had listed among the students with learning difficulties were precisely those who were the first to be activated during the lesson. They wanted to participate, the material they had prepared was very accurate, and they knew who the right

source was. Their level came to increase during that presentation hour, something I had not seen from that perspective until that moment. This is something very good, because we have that inclusiveness of all students."

Sh.Q, Teacher

This finding suggests that MIL, beyond its primary objectives of building critical thinking and informational competencies, also functions as an instrument of educational inclusion offering an alternative entry point into academic content for students who do not thrive in traditional text-based instructional modes. The implication for both pedagogy and equity policy is significant.

The application of MIL in the so-called 'exact' sciences, long assumed to be less natural ground for media-based teaching, is one of the more striking developments described in both the survey and the focus group. Teachers of mathematics report using media sources to develop critical analysis of statistical claims, interpretation of graphics, and verification of numerical information encountered in everyday digital environments, such as advertised discounts or commercial offers. Teachers describe MIL as fully integral to the subject, with every lesson involving some element of source identification, comparison, and critical assessment.

"In mathematics, it is mainly about comparing data, interpreting graphics, getting information from different graphs and seeing if the interpretation is correct through different media. For example, for the percentage part, on an online page you find information about price reductions. Is it real? Let's discuss; they develop critical thinking by comparing, doing their actions."

V.G, Teacher

A further pedagogical strength of MIL identified is its capacity to integrate abstract or technical curriculum content in current, real-world events. Chemistry teachers describe lessons on polymers tied directly to news coverage of building facade fires, biology teachers link discussions of nutrition to debates about updated food pyramids and dietary supplements, and social sciences teachers use the appearance of new professions and labor market trends to drive source-comparison exercises. This approach transforms what might otherwise be boring theoretical material into questions that students recognize as immediately relevant to their lives and future careers, while at the same time providing a concrete occasion to apply the source-verification habits cultivated through MIL.

"The example was real and it was current, and they touched it themselves. It was their concern. Critical thinking is at every stage; there is no need for critical thinking to be expected at fixed points as it is a process and as such happens naturally while setting the discussion in the classroom."

E.M, Teacher

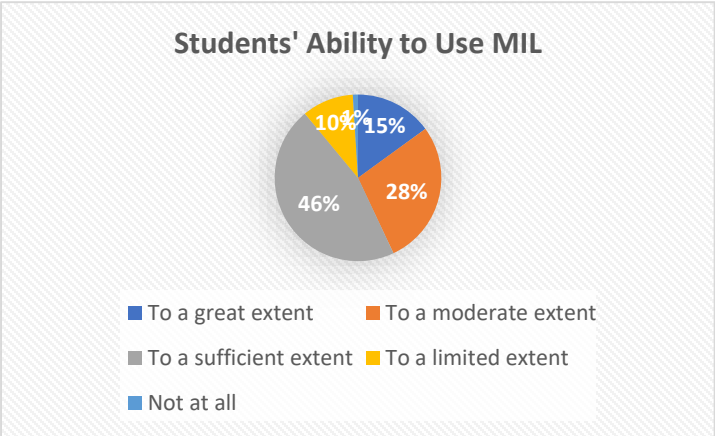
Several teachers also describe the use of consumer advertising and influencer content as starting material for critical analysis exercises. In a lesson on consumption, for example, students were divided into two groups those who considered themselves influenced by advertising and those who did not, and were asked to defend their positions with arguments. Teachers report that this format consistently produces shifts of opinion grounded in evidence rather than social pressure, and that students often subsequently apply the same analytical frame to other domains of their lives, from health products to body-image content.

A particularly striking example presented in the second focus group concerned a lesson developed with eighth-grade students on the phenomenon of aesthetic surgical interventions among young people, framed under the title 'Bodies under construction'. The lesson combined a pre-class survey of students' exposure to relevant influencers, a structured debate organized in pro and contra groups, and a closing exercise on critical content creation. The teacher reports that students engaged with unusual seriousness, recognizing the topic as one that affects them directly, and that the algorithmic exposure to a small set of high-visibility models emerged as the central object of discussion.

> ***"Algorithms decide what pupils see, and those influencers and models always appear before their eyes. The child sees this model 100 times a day and the teacher once a day. Of course he will follow that model that he/she is constantly feed with. But how are we going to compete with the virtual world if they keep living there? It is difficult but we try to make them think critically."***
>
> ***E. H, School Director.***

4.4 The impact of MIL on pupils' skills

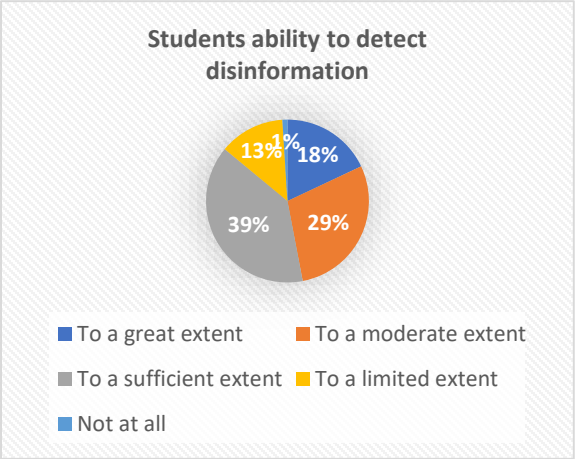
The survey data indicate a broadly positive impact of MIL integration on pupils across several key dimensions. More than 90% of teachers' report noticing an increase in student interest and engagement during MIL-integrated classes. These responses strongly suggest that MIL-oriented teaching methods consistently generate higher levels of student motivation than traditional approaches.



In terms of informational competencies, 89% of teachers assess their students as being sufficiently or highly capable of using media and information sources to independently explore topics in support of their learning. Similarly, 85% report that students have improved their ability to distinguish disinformation from accurate information over the course of the year, with 18% observing very significant improvement. These

figures suggest that MIL integration is making a measurable contribution to building the critical media skills that are central to the project's objectives.

Students' growing interest in media-related and digital topics is also reflected in the types of controversial issues they choose to investigate further. Media and media literacy topics (28%) and technology and innovation (17%) rank as the most frequently selected topics for independent inquiry, indicating that students are not merely receiving MIL content passively but are actively extending their engagement with the questions it raises into areas of personal and civic relevance.



The focus group provides a richer picture of how these impacts manifest in the classroom. Teachers describe a consistent pattern of increased student responsibility in the way they seek, handle, and present information, a change they attribute directly to the habits developed through repeated MIL activities. Students arrive in class having consulted multiple sources, learned to identify the accuracy of information, and prepared to discuss rather than simply recite. Several teachers note a qualitative shift in the nature of student contributions, with students more willing to defend their own interpretations and more equipped to do so with evidence.

"They felt more responsible in the way they found information, in the way they conveyed it, encouraging critical thinking. They know how to find information. They connect it with an image, make the association, find something in common. MIL helps them to discuss certain ideas and doing so through their own approach."

N.S, Teacher

Teachers also describe less expected but equally significant dimensions of impact. Several participants report an increase in student self-confidence, linked to the experience of bringing independent research to class and receiving acknowledgement for it. One participant describes how receiving unique and personally sourced information creates a sense of ownership and pride in the student, a dynamic that in turn motivates further effort and deeper engagement. Others observe that students who had previously been disengaged or passive become active participants when tasks are structured around media materials and group discussion.

"Receiving information and practicing it in the lesson creates a kind of trust and a kind of priority for the student. You also get a higher evaluation; "You see that I did something good that others didn't do?!", that's why self-confidence increases. They are encouraged not to take that copy-paste; I want everyone to have their own information to point out."

E.R., Teacher

"Now they are not bringing copy-paste information, but processing and selecting it according to the points I have asked them for. They have learned more carefully how to select what we are looking for, the essence, as briefly as possible. It is a change in the concept: critical thinking and MIL together."

V.G., Teacher

"What accompanies such a lesson is that at the end, the students have a personal stance related to the developed concept. Since in template lessons sometimes it happens that they do not have a stance at all, they simply reach the lesson's author, but without having a stance. We ask students for a stance to a certain situation; to explore his or her point of view."

N.K, Teacher

A further dimension of impact identified in the focus group discussions is the translation of MIL competencies into concrete civic action and personal safety behavior. Several teachers describe how MIL training has equipped students, and the school staff who support them, to recognize and respond to online-safety incidents involving harassment, identity misuse, or non-consensual circulation of images. Tools such as the national platform isigurt.al and school-based 'safe-internet ambassador' programs are described as integral to this work, alongside regular short educational sessions integrated into weekly classroom time and the use of platforms such as Google Classroom for ongoing dissemination of safety guidance.

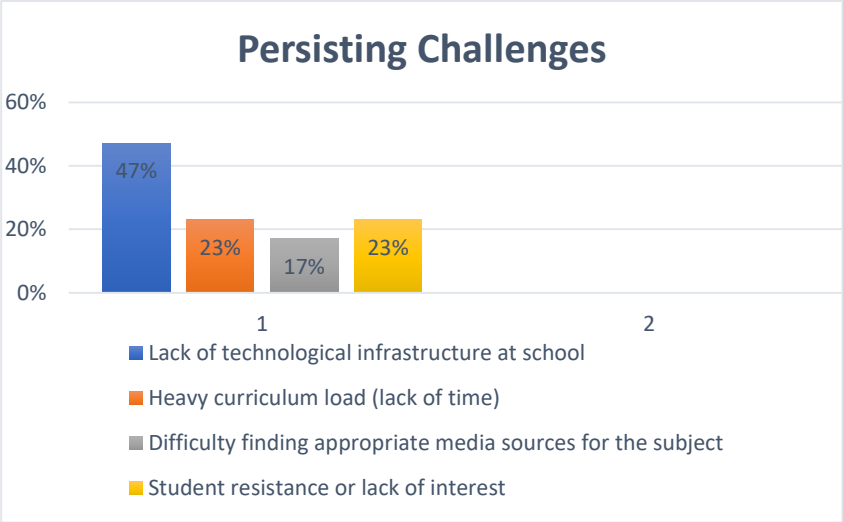
> *"We have a referral platform that works very well for us. When you need to contact the police, they have a cyber-officer. We have received feedback from the school psychologist and social workers through a Google Form: do you feel an online concern? What do these children do at the first moment they have such a concern? Where do they refer it as a case? When school starts, screen time normalizes, but in the summer there are students who report 10–12 hours use per day. It is scary."*
>
> ***E.R., Teacher***

Teachers also describe MIL's role in enabling discussion of topics previously treated as taboo or socially difficult. Biology teachers, in particular, report that the use of validated multimedia materials, films, scientific platforms, documentaries, has substantially altered the classroom dynamic around reproductive health, contraception, and related topics. Whereas these lessons were previously marked by student discomfort, mockery, or disruption, the same topics are now approached with maturity and curiosity, with students consulting external sources in advance and asking informed questions in class.

In terms of the forms students choose to express their views, the survey reveals that conventional formats such as posters (37%), essays (27%), and visual artworks (19%), continue to dominate. Digital formats such as video tutorials, podcasts, and PowerPoint presentations account for a small minority of responses, reflecting the infrastructural constraints discussed below. This distribution suggests that while MIL practice has expanded substantially in terms of the informational and analytical dimensions of the framework, the creative and digital production dimension remains comparatively underdeveloped.

4.5 Persisting challenges

Despite the significant progress documented above, the findings reveal a set of persistent challenges that constrain more consistent, ambitious, and equitable implementation of MIL across the project school network.



The most frequently cited challenge is the lack of technological infrastructure at school (47%). This includes unreliable or absent internet access, insufficient numbers of devices, and the absence of dedicated digital workspaces in many classrooms. Focus group participants describe their responses to this challenge with sincerity: teachers routinely use personal laptops, mobile phones, and private internet connections to deliver lessons that require digital resources, and in at least one case a school community collectively purchased and installed video projectors for all classrooms, funded through informal parental contributions. While these examples speak to the high degree of commitment and resourcefulness among the teachers involved in the project, they also highlight the extent to which implementation currently depends on individual effort and improvisation rather than systemic support.

> ***"We collected contributions for two years. The parents bought the laptops, the parents bought the video projectors. We installed them ourselves. I have twenty classes, all with video projectors. We also made the teachers' room with a video projector and a laptop, and the Smart Laboratory that they brought us. So they have the means, they still have a few problems with the internet, but parents do not discuss support at all when they see it is proving effective for their children."***
>
> ***E.K., School Director***

Time pressure resulting from heavy curriculum loads and high number of pupils in class, ranks as the second most significant challenge (23%). Teachers describe a structural tension between the depth of engagement that MIL activities ideally require, including time for research, debate, reflection, and revision, and the time available within 45-minute lessons and dense annual curricula. Several focus group participants note that managing a classroom debate on a controversial media topic can easily consume more time than allocated, requiring the lesson plan to be adjusted or topics to be carried over to

subsequent sessions. Time is also cited as a constraint on lesson preparation: developing or curating appropriate media materials for specific topics and age groups is described as a time-intensive process that is not always compatible with teachers' existing workloads.

> ***"Sometimes a material you have presented stimulates debate, and that debate can take more time, so you have to be very careful to manage the time to achieve the results you have set. Within those 45 minutes of teaching, when there are lessons that require debate and questions, time management is done by leaving time in advance, telling the children that it takes x minutes for this part. All the responsibility, I would say, lies with the teacher."***
>
> ***L.M, Teacher***

> ***"The most important part is infrastructure. We are talking about technology, but we do not have the conditions in every class to implement what we are doing. We are doing a lot of theory, but practically we do not have the conditions."***
>
> ***E.L., Teacher***

The difficulty of finding appropriate and verified media sources for specific subjects (17%) is the third most frequently cited challenge. While general-purpose media and news content is readily available, teachers describe the difficulty of identifying materials that are accurate, age-appropriate, subject-specific, and pedagogically usable without extensive adaptation. This challenge is particularly acute for teachers of science subjects, who require materials that meet scientific accuracy standards and who have fewer established resources to draw on than their colleagues in the humanities.

> ***"It shouldn't be left only to the teacher to select information, not everyone is capable of choosing the material that really matters. It depends on personal taste, but also on the beliefs we have. You can't leave it up to the teacher to decide for everything that will be shared, there must be some standardized foundations. Certain people must be appointed to prepare the materials and then each of us can adapt."***
>
> ***Sh.Q, Teacher***

A challenge that emerged with particular clarity in the second focus group, and which is closely linked to the rapid spread of generative AI tools, is plagiarism. Teachers across subjects describe the difficulty of assessing student work when materials prepared at home are increasingly composed of copy-pasted internet content or AI-generated text. The issue is particularly acute in subjects where homework has traditionally been the principal assessment tool, and several teachers report shifting an increasing share of their assessment weight to in-class work in response. This shift, while pedagogically defensible, has its own costs: it reduces the time available for content delivery and creates additional grading workload.

> ***"A concerning issue remains plagiarism. What we have done with the writing, with the discussion, with the thinking, goes undone if this is given as homework. The plagiarism will go on a massive scale."***
>
> ***J.D., Teacher***

A further inequality identified in the second focus group, distinct from the infrastructure gap at school level, concerns the differential access of students to digital devices at home. Several teachers report that a meaningful proportion of their students do not have a computer at home and rely exclusively on a phone or on shared family devices for homework. This affects both the quality of the work students can produce outside of school and the depth of their engagement with media research tasks. The implication is that even where school infrastructure is adequate, the household digital divide continues to shape what MIL integration can realistically achieve.

Student resistance or lack of interest is cited by 13% of respondents. This figure is relatively low and is consistent with the strongly positive impact data reported in the previous section, but it merits attention as an indication that MIL integration is not universally embraced across all student groups. Focus group discussions suggest that this resistance is most common in older secondary students and may be related to competing social and academic pressures rather than a fundamental disengagement from the approach.

In terms of how teachers have addressed these challenges, the most common strategies involve personal initiative and peer collaboration. 37% of respondents' report using personal resources, their own devices, internet connections, or privately purchased materials, to overcome infrastructure gaps. 25% describe collaborative solutions involving colleagues, students, parents, or community members. These findings reinforce the picture of high individual commitment described above, while also highlighting the need for more systematic, institutionally supported solutions.

On the question of support from institutional leadership, the results are strongly positive: 92% of respondents feel supported by school and network leaders to experiment with new MIL approaches. This creates an important enabling condition for continued implementation and suggests that institutional cultures within the project school network are broadly conducive to pedagogical innovation. However, positive institutional support cannot substitute for the material and structural conditions, principally infrastructure, time, and resources, without which more ambitious and equitable implementation cannot be achieved.

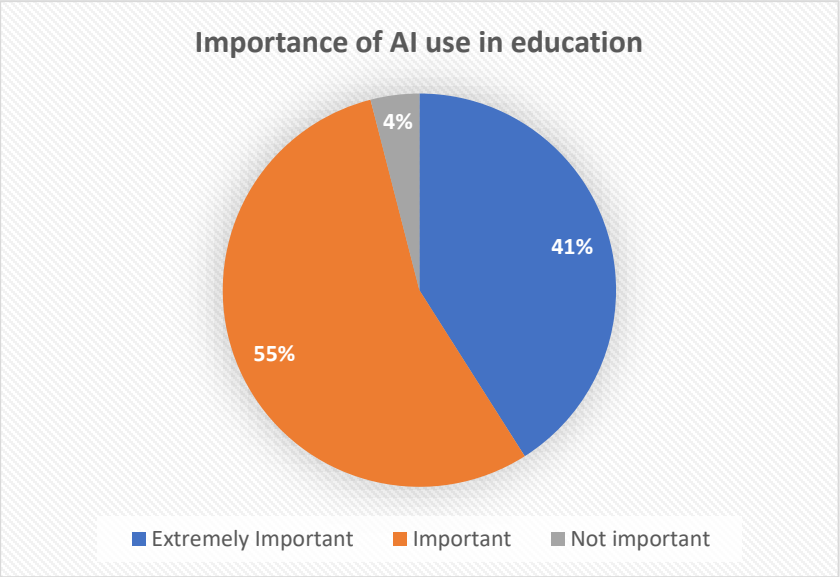
Looking to the future, teachers' highest priorities for additional support are a platform with ready-made curricular materials and models (42%) and practical training for specific digital tools (39%). Periodic opportunities for experience exchange with colleagues (19%) are also highlighted. These suggestions are consistent with the challenges described above and reflect a clear request for practical, usable, and time-efficient resources rather than additional theoretical input. Comments and open suggestions submitted through the survey reinforce this picture, with practical training, technological infrastructure, and a shared resource platform identified as the top three priorities.

"Continuous and practical training is important, as well as appropriate materials in relation to age groups and subjects. The working formats could be workshops: we will be in the role of the student, of the teacher, and in the meantime working and learning. An interactive training approach would help us to do our job better."

E.H., Teacher

4.6 AI Literacy in education

A distinctive feature of this reporting period is the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as both an educational reality and a source of pedagogical uncertainty.



The survey results show that 96% of respondents consider understanding and ethically implementing AI in education to be important or very important.

This high level of awareness reflects the rapid expansion of AI tools, above all generative AI applications such as ChatGPT, into students' everyday learning practices, and the sense among teachers that they are encountering a challenge for which they feel insufficiently prepared.

In the survey, AI and digital technology is identified as the most common category of controversial issue encountered in the media (24%), and the most frequently discussed topic in the context of developing higher-order thinking skills (22%). This reflects both the prominence of AI-related content in public discourse and the degree to which teachers are already addressing AI as a topic within their existing MIL work, helping students to think critically about AI tools, their capabilities, limitations, and ethical implications.

The focus group discussions reveal a more ambivalent and nuanced picture of how teachers currently navigate AI in their classrooms. Teachers describe a shared concern about students' tendency to use generative AI tools, primarily ChatGPT, to produce homework assignments without meaningful processing or critical engagement. Several participants note that distinguishing AI-generated work from students' own writing has become a practical assessment challenge, and that the incentive to produce polished but empty outputs risks undermining the very skills, critical thinking, argumentation, independent expression, that MIL integration aims to develop.

"We ask students to get ideas from Artificial Intelligence, but to process it in their own way, with their own opinion, their thinking, their approach. The idea is there, but the way they adapt it must come from the student themselves."

E.S., Teacher

"What has been bothering us lately is that we value class assignments more, compared to homework. Because tomorrow the parent comes and says: 'Why can't you give him a A or B when he has the homework correct?' But he can't check it. We can check it by asking questions to understand whether it is his own work or not."

E.B., Teacher

At the same time, teachers' express enthusiasm for the pedagogical possibilities opened by AI tools when used in structured and intentional ways. Focus group participants describe using AI-generated content as a starting point for critical analysis exercises, asking students to evaluate, challenge, or reframe AI outputs using their own knowledge and reasoning. Others describe the use of subject-specific digital platforms and simulation tools that incorporate AI-powered elements to support learning in science subjects, describing these as transformative in making complex or otherwise inaccessible content engaging and comprehensible.

"I have a platform that allows me to conduct virtual experiments. When using it, the student takes the test tube, the chemical beaker, the substances and the reaction happens. For a reaction that I cannot carry out in laboratory conditions, the student will use this. They gain a lot of knowledge through it."

D.D., Teacher

Several teachers also report experimenting with AI-assisted lesson planning tools, describing how structured prompts specifying subject, age group, topic, and learning objectives can generate usable lesson frameworks that reduce preparation time significantly. This practical application of AI as a teacher productivity tool is viewed positively, though participants note the need for teachers to critically review and contextualize AI-generated materials before using them in class.

"A few months ago we did a training as a school and two IT professors from the university came to us. They gave us some ready-made platforms, where you input all the data such as age, level, topic and you extract the entire curriculum in a structured way. It was ready in no time. They were reliable sites that worked perfectly. It was very helpful for the daily planner."

M.P., Teacher

A concrete proposal that emerged repeatedly in the second focus group is the development of a dedicated AI assistant for teachers, based in the official Albanian pre-university curriculum and lesson-planning standards. Participants could use a tool that would relieve teachers of routine preparatory tasks,

generating differentiated activities for groups of varying ability, drafting structured lesson outlines aligned with the curriculum, producing tailored quiz materials, while preserving the teacher's creative and relational role in the classroom. Teachers stress that such a tool should function as an assistant rather than a substitute, with all outputs reviewed and adapted by the teacher before classroom use, and that its grounding in the official curriculum would represent a decisive advance over the use of general-purpose AI tools currently available.

> ***"The idea is to base it on the official curriculum and those plans, so we don't have to do manual work. It doesn't replace our role, but we have it as an academic assistant, personalized with all the instructions for teachers. We won't waste time on mechanical things anymore, but we focus on interaction, to create relationships with the student. The lessons become more creative."***
>
> L.M., Teacher

Alongside this constructive proposal, participants in the second focus group voiced significant concern about the impact of generative AI on younger users, particularly the algorithmic personalization that exposes children to narrow and increasingly extreme content, the addictive design patterns of some platforms and games, and the documented links between heavy AI-Chabot use and adverse mental-health outcomes among adolescents. Teachers express a view that AI tools require stricter protective measures when used by minors than when used by adult learners, and that any pedagogical integration of generative AI at the pre-university level should be accompanied by explicit safeguards and ongoing supervising support.

The overall picture that emerges from both the survey and the focus group is of a teaching workforce that recognizes the urgency and significance of AI literacy as an educational priority, is already facing its implications in practice, but lacks the structured guidance, practical training, and institutional frameworks necessary to do so confidently and consistently. The National Digital Agenda for Education 2025–2030 addresses this directly, identifying the development of guidelines and practical use cases for generative AI (Objective 3), the integration of AI into the ICT curriculum (Objective 3), and the expansion of teacher training in AI and digital competencies (Objective 4) as priority policy measures. The findings of this study confirm the urgency of these interventions and provide practical grounding for their design.

5. Conclusions

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) into the Albanian pre-university education system has evolved from a pilot intervention into a meaningful pedagogical practice with visible impact across subjects and school levels.

Teachers participating in the project report high levels of conceptual understanding and increasing confidence in applying MIL methodologies in the classroom, suggesting that sustained training and institutional cooperation have created a strong foundation for long-term integration. The evidence indicates that MIL is no longer perceived only as an additional thematic component, but increasingly as a broader pedagogical approach that supports critical thinking, independent inquiry, and student participation.

MIL has had a positive influence on students' engagement and learning behaviors. Teachers consistently describe students as more active, reflective, and capable of evaluating information critically, particularly in relation to disinformation, online content, and controversial social issues. Importantly, the findings suggest that MIL contributes not only to cognitive development, but also to inclusion and student confidence, creating alternative pathways for participation among students who may struggle in more traditional learning environments.

The integration of collaborative work, debate, multimedia resources, and real-world examples appears to make learning more relevant and connected to students' everyday digital experiences.

The sustainability of MIL integration still depends heavily on teachers' individual commitment and improvisation. Significant inequalities in technological infrastructure, limited access to devices and internet connectivity, insufficient time within dense curricula, and the lack of structured repositories of verified teaching materials continue to constrain implementation.

While school leadership support is largely positive, the findings make clear that institutional encouragement alone cannot replace systemic investment and coordinated policy support. The persistence of these barriers risks creating uneven access to MIL competencies across schools and student groups.

Teachers recognize AI literacy as an urgent educational priority, yet they simultaneously express uncertainty regarding its pedagogical and ethical use. The findings reveal a tension between the opportunities AI creates for creativity, lesson planning, simulation, and personalized learning, and the risks associated with plagiarism, superficial learning, algorithmic influence, and overreliance on automated content generation. This suggests that AI literacy should not be treated as separate from MIL, but rather as an extension of the same critical and ethical framework.

6. Recommendations

Based on the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative findings, the following recommendations are directed at the main stakeholders involved for implementing and scaling MIL integration within the pre-university system.

Ministry of Education and Sports

- Make Media and Information Literacy (MIL) a core objective of the updated National Strategy on Education 2027 – 2032, recognizing its urgency and essential role in preparing learners for the digital and information age.
- Prioritize MIL network schools in the National Digital Agenda infrastructure interventions, including Smart Labs expansion, broadband connectivity, and device provision.
- Complete the ICT curriculum update across all pre-university grades, with explicit integration of MIL competencies in national standards.
- Mandate the development of MIL assessment frameworks within updated curriculum documentation.

Agency of Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education

- Develop and validate instruments to evaluate and report on student MIL competencies.
- Integrate MIL indicators into school quality review processes and teacher performance standards.

Albanian Media Institute and other CSOs

- Develop a curated digital resource bank of subject-specific, age-appropriate MIL materials and lesson frameworks, ideally hosted on the SMIP or an equivalent national platform.
- Produce practical, subject-differentiated AI literacy guidance for teachers, covering critical evaluation of AI-generated content, algorithmic awareness, and ethical use.
- Advocate for the explicit inclusion of MIL competencies in updated curriculum standards and assessment policy.

Professional Network Leaders

- Organize periodic cross-school experience exchange meetings to sustain peer collaboration within the MIL teacher network.
- Facilitate structured peer observation and feedback cycles among network members.
- Coordinate ongoing subject-specific mentoring relationships, building on the model proven effective in earlier project phases.

MIL experts and trainers

- Redesign training as practice-based workshops in which teachers work with real materials from their own subjects, co-develop lessons, and test them collaboratively.
- Incorporate training on specific digital tools as a regular component of professional development, responding to the need identified by 39% of survey respondents.

- Deliver subject-differentiated AI literacy training grounded in the classroom realities documented in this report.

Teachers

- Integrate AI literacy topics into MIL classes using the frameworks and guidance to be developed, helping students critically evaluate AI-generated content and navigate questions of authorship and accuracy.
- Draw on the shared digital resource bank and contribute materials from their own practice to enrich it.
- Engage actively in peer networks, collaborative lesson development, and cross-school exchange.

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