

D2.3.1. Integration

Three reports with recommendations for policy and regulation, learning and awareness raising

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User Empowerment in a Social Media Culture

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1. Introduction

Social media play an increasingly important role in everyday social and cultural life. Social media create a whole lot of opportunities for people to communicate, learn, exchange information and maintain relationships in a new way. However they also come with risks concerning bullying, inappropriate use, privacy invasions and the commercial (ab)use of personal data. It is important that all people in all contexts, young and older, at home, at school or at work, are able to deal with social media in a way that maximizes their benefits and minimizes their pitfalls.

Within the User Empowerment in a Social Media Culture (EMSOC) IWT – SBO project, researchers from the University of Brussels - VUB, Ghent University - UGent and the University of Leuven - KULeuven have investigated this by focusing on three main themes: inclusion, privacy and social media literacy. Within this last theme, several studies have been conducted to explore social media use and conceptualise, operationalize and measure social media literacy. We define this social media literacy as *“the practical, cognitive and affective competencies needed to access, analyse, evaluate and create social media content across a variety of contexts”* (Vanwynsberghe, 2014, p. 102). Our goal was to generate a broad view of the state of social media literacy in different contexts, private as well as professional, and for different user groups.

This report is split up into three themes: “Social media use and experience in Flanders”, “Youth and social media” and “Social media at work”. The first theme summarizes the findings from a large-scale survey aimed at the Flemish population of 16 and older. Based on this survey we are able to make some general recommendations for different user groups, which we incorporate in the next two themes focused on youth and work. For each of these two themes, we describe three cases and line out recommendations for stakeholders and policy.



2. Social media use and experience in Flanders

In Flanders, scientific quantitative research on social media use has so far primarily focused on people's use of social media. The EMSOC survey goes beyond the mere measurement and analysis of people's social media use to focus on people's social media *perceptions* and *experiences*. The central question we aim to answer is whether users are really empowered by their use of social media. To do so, our survey focuses on the three EMSOC sub-themes: inclusion, media literacy and privacy. The online questionnaire is targeted at the Flemish population aged 16 or older.

One of the findings from the survey is that Facebook is the most successful social media site in terms of number of subscriptions and frequency of use among the Flemish population. However, Twitter rates more favourably than Facebook in other aspects, including trustworthiness, fairness and the extent to which the social media site respects users' privacy and takes into account what they want. Users are less critical of Twitter than of Facebook, and are less concerned about what happens to their data and about their privacy. About this data, a striking observation is that users do not seem to differentiate between personal data (provided by users at the time of registration e.g. age, e-mail address) and user data (shared by users on social media e.g. status update, photo (i.e. user-generated content) or data concerning use behaviour e.g. time of posting, location). Although it seems reasonable that users would be more careful with their personal information than with what they post on social media, from our survey it seems that users either do not understand the difference or lack specific ideas about these different types of data.

We also found that both Facebook and Twitter users have high levels of self-assessed technical skills needed for activities that are relatively easy to perform, such as posting photos and using hashtags – the same activities that users perform most often. Complex activities, or activities that are hidden in sites' architecture, such as reporting an advertisement or cleaning up likes are less often performed and are also seen as being more difficult. In contrast with these rather high technical competencies the survey shows that both Facebook and Twitter users have very little knowledge of the social media sites they use. In particular, users are unaware that their data is being sold, of the extent of information filtered out before it is shown on their Twitter or Facebook feeds, and that they give up copyright (if there even is any copyright, which is not the case on Twitter) on everything they post on these social media sites. This lack of knowledge is closely related to users' attitudes; they claim to be bothered by the selling of data, filter algorithms and copyright loss, but their ignorance of whether these things actually occur means they fail to evaluate the social media sites as critically as may be required.

More than half of Facebook users are worried about their privacy and feel Facebook as a company does not respect it. However, less than half of the Facebook users have ever read the terms and conditions and privacy policy, presumably because of the difficulty of the language used in these documents. One promising finding is that eight out of ten Facebook users have customized their privacy settings, which may be easier and more concrete than reading the relevant documents. However, these privacy settings only cover protection of social privacy (i.e. in relation to other users) and do not guarantee institutional privacy (i.e. in relation to social media companies).



It seems that there is still a lot of work to be done in terms of the social media literacy of the Flemish population. Some users may have high technical skills, but only few of them have the required critical mindset. Other users may be very critical, but may lack technical competencies to adequately deal with social media. As different user groups may have different weaknesses and strengths, it is important that we target them in personalized ways. Below, we focus on two important groups: youth and employees. We incorporate results from the EMSOC survey to make recommendations for both user groups.



3. Youth and social media

In the first theme we concentrate on adolescents, because they are the generation of the future and will consequently determine how social media are used in the future (Rheingold, 2012). They are simultaneously seen as the generation of the so-called 'digital natives', people who are growing up digitally, and thus also as the generation who is imbued with social media (Prensky, 2001). However because of their intense use of social media, they are also seen as the most vulnerable group, at greater risk.

Within this theme, we first look at young children's general media use in the "Apestaartjaren" case. Next, we discuss social media use by youth in the home context by investigating the impact of parental mediation on young people's development of social media literacy. Lastly, we discuss a case on teacher training, and how optimising this training may enhance literacy levels in children and adolescents. Based on these case studies, we provide recommendations for policy, teachers and parents.

3.1 The @ years... or the app years?

Apestaartjaren is a biennial research project focusing on how young people engage with digital media, including social media. We concentrate on groups aged between 12 to 18 years and between 9 to 12 years old. Conducting mixed-method research every two years enables to monitor the diffusion of ICT among young people over time (longitudinal aspect). Based on large-scale surveys in schools for the different age groups and extensive qualitative research through in-depth interviews, Apestaartjaren gathers knowledge about how children and young people deal with digital and social media. We especially gather in-depth knowledge on how they incorporate these new technologies in their daily lives. The longitudinal character of the project is not only necessary to formulate valuable recommendations for education and policymakers, it also inspires youth workers and other organizations how to keep up with new developments.

This edition Apestaartjaren put forward the following general themes to ensure covering different focal areas: media possession and use, media consumption, social media, the app-years, media at school, media in leisure time and digital engagement.

Throughout the different themes of Apestaartjaren two reoccurring findings stand out. First of all: media use of children and young people increasingly becomes personal. They use social media to communicate in smaller groups and use private messaging services rather than updating their Facebook status. Smaller social media such as Snapchat, Whatsapp and Instagram are gaining popularity. Media use of children and young people also increasingly becomes mobile. 86% of our respondents have a cell phone or smart phone, however only 37% has a mobile data plan, which means that most people are still reliant on the home Wi-Fi network of public Wi-Fi hotspots. This may be due to high prices of



mobile data plans. Less than three out of ten children have a tablet of their own, but almost seven out of ten have access to a shared tablet at home, which they can take to their rooms.

Even though there are over 20 million apps, young people mainly use Facebook, Snapchat, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter, once again apps targeted at communicating in smaller groups. For younger kids, gaming apps are quiet popular (e.g. Flappy Bird). Game websites (e.g. Spelletjes.nl) are the most visited websites, except for YouTube and Facebook (on which users also often play games).

At school, although social media are increasingly being used in the classroom, this is still only done by a minority of teachers. Three out of four students feel their teachers should use social media more often in class. Compared to previous years, children and young people say they learn more about privacy and critically dealing with online sources, however there are still a lot of children who don't get any information at school about these things. Students themselves massively use social media (mainly Facebook) to discuss homework in small groups. Online learning platforms offered by the school are rarely being used.

The Apestaartjaren research also shows that most young people acknowledge that online engagement is not the same as actual engagement, e.g. they feel that liking a protesting Facebook page is rather useless (however four out of ten do actually like these pages). The majority of children and young people in Flanders believe that offline engagement is the only way to set things in motion.

3.2 The importance of parents' active involvement

In our research on parental mediation we focus on the use of social media by youth in the home context and the impact of parenting styles on social media literacy development in adolescents. We see that existing research mainly looks at general Internet use of children. However, there are important differences between Web 1.0 (traditional Internet) and Web 2.0 (social media), such as the increased active role of users in selecting, creating, commenting on and sharing of content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media may alter parents' ideas about the risks their children are confronted with online, such as cyberbullying and privacy-invasions. Web 2.0 also grants parents access to their kids' personal information and online behaviour, however a lot of parents have little to no experience with social media, which may hinder them in efficiently setting rules for their children. Social media thus pose a series of challenges for parents to deal with their kids' behaviour (Boudry, Vanwynsberghe & Verdegem, 2013).

As it is neither desirable nor possible to investigate all social media sites at once, we focused on Facebook, the largest social media site at the moment. We used data from the Apestaartjaren studies (cf. 3.1) to take a closer look at the way parents deal with the social media use of their children. We distinguish four parenting styles regarding Facebook use, based on two dimensions of parental mediation, i.e. control and warmth. These styles empirically validate the four established parenting styles for Internet use (Boudry et al., 2013). They differ in the extent to which they are more open and non-directional versus restrictive and controlling. The authoritarian parenting style demands absolute



obedience from children. The authoritative parenting style involves rules outlined by parents combined with discussion with adolescents. These first two parenting styles use a lot of restrictions and control strategies and focus on protecting children from the pitfalls of using Facebook. The permissive parenting style involves parents not putting forward explicit rules, but rather discussing what they and their children want. The laissez-faire parenting style involves an almost complete lack of parental intervention, or at most only very limited intervention (Vanwynsberghe, Boudry & Verdegem, 2014). The permissive and laissez-faire styles are characterized by little control and restrictions and a focus on letting children discover for themselves what the advantages of using social media sites could be.

In contrast to general Internet use (Web 1.0), where authoritative parenting styles tend to be the most used strategy, in the Web 2.0 context most parents adopt a permissive strategy. We believe this has to do with the differences between the traditional Internet and social media, and with the lack of experience with social media of parents. As children often have more expertise than their parents it is hard for parents to set rules. And even if they did set rules, in a social media context these are hard to enforce. Adolescents may use their own social media literacy to bypass their parents' rules.

In line with previous research (Fleming, Greentree, Cocotti-Muller, Elias & Morrison, 2006; Lwin, Stanaland & Miyazaki, 2008), we find that strategies with active involvement of parents in their children's Facebook use are positively related to their kids' development of social media literacy. Permissive and authoritative parenting styles respectively relate to higher technical and cognitive social media competencies. As adolescents need both technical as well as cognitive competencies in order to deal with social media a combination of these styles may be ideal to maximize social media's advantages and minimize their pitfalls. Authoritarian parenting styles (merely imposing rules) or laissez-faire styles (not doing anything) don't sufficiently guide adolescents in their social media use.

3.3 Teachers as cultural mediators

In this case study we explore literary communication practices within social media environments. Our attention is directed specifically to the role of the teacher. Sociocultural institutions such as schools have an important role to play in formulating and operationalising societal expectations and norms regarding media use and sociocultural participation. We look at the ways in which trainee teachers deal with the developments and changes of cultural literacy within social media environments, with literary culture as our focal point. We want to map out how teachers can optimally function as intermediaries in enhancing cultural literacy through social media. The case study focuses on how teachers describe and experience literary practices and their own role(s) in the social media environments, as well as how they perceive their own opportunities to act within it. We focused on *Goodreads* as an example of a social media platform concerning literary culture.

We find that publicly sharing personal (literary) experiences forms an important part of participating in literary culture through social media. Social media enable people to visually express their thoughts, opinions, tastes and social relations. This way social media users can take on a certain social role which is recognisable for others. This process of recognition is important for the development of trust, which



in turn is of crucial importance for intermediaries in general and teachers more specifically. However, the trainee teachers note that automated recommendations could be one of the pitfalls of social media platforms like *Goodreads*. Algorithmically generated recommendations might trap students in a filter bubble or inhibit their desire to explore other genres and styles. As such, reading experiences and literacy development could become too heavily dependent on personal preferences and stimulate uninformed self-management. The trainee teachers in our study therefore propose that teachers take control of students' access to online content, for instance by creating semi-public discussion groups, in order to protect them from bad influences. They also realize that this proposal presents a stark contrast with the opportunities for participation in a meaningful social context offered by the social media.

The trainee teachers emphasize the important role of teachers as experts of the literary field, supporters of cultural discussions and experts in value judgement and quality control and contrast these qualities of teachers with the shortcomings of social media platforms such as *Goodreads*. They feel that teachers should help to develop literacy among their students in at least three ways: by curating reading lists to guide students, by encouraging and supporting students to participate in cultural conversations and by providing protection for students against potentially negative experiences. Ultimately, the study shows that the participants struggle to find a balance between supporting meaningful participation and providing guidance and protection.

3.4 Recommendations

3.4.1. Policy

As children and young people spend a lot of their time at school, the implementation of adequate policies in the educational system is crucial for their development of social media literacy. We formulate recommendations mainly based on case 3.3, which deals with trainee teachers' ideas of social media at school. We also rely on case 3.1 on social media use in the home context, as it gives us insights in how teachers may best stimulate children to develop a critical social media mind set and good technical social media skills. The first recommendations are mainly targeted at educational policies on a macro-level (i.e. government), e.g. concerning transformations in the curriculum, while the last two recommendations primarily focus on the meso-level (policies within the school context).

- Include social media literacy education more extensively in the existing pedagogical and sociocultural programs.
- Reframe the role of teachers as coaches in order to support a more systematic transfer of experiences (i.e. sources for knowledge, skills and attitudes) between the classroom and other social contexts in which pupils engage daily (e.g. at home, sports club, hobbies).
- Provide room for bottom-up experimentation and innovation, whilst increasing flexibility and creativity among teachers.
- Stimulate the focus on social media in teacher training programmes. This will inspire teachers to share ideas and experiments, building their confidence to do so, but also to invite and accept comments and feedback from others.



- Give more attention to social media as informal learning environments, recognizing their potential. However be wary of overcompensation; social media should not become the focal point of education but should rather fulfil a complementary role.
- Stimulate the building of peer networks for sharing social media experiences amongst teachers and in teacher training programs in order to raise awareness about the importance of knowledge transfer.
- Although most young people have access to social media, keep focussing on the minority of youngsters without access to certain types of media (due to a lack of access to devices or a lack of competencies to deal with them).
- Look into different possibilities to lower the price of mobile data plans as well as to facilitate Wi-Fi networks at school and in public venues.
- Stimulate schools to actively involve young people when formulating a social media policy, as open communication in combination with guidelines is found to be the most successful strategy for increasing social media literacy.
- Set out learning networks within the school community where teachers can exchange positive as well as negative experiences and develop practical and policy-related guidelines. Cooperate with local partners such as the library or youth services as well.
- Develop a policy for mobile social media use within the school and optimally make use of its benefits. Stimulate the use of tablets and smartphones in class. In addition, set out clear rules about the use of Wi-Fi at school instead of merely discouraging it.

3.4.2. Teachers & parents

As children and young people are surrounded by their parents or teachers most of the time, it is important that these caregivers effectively enhance social media literacy in children. The following recommendations stem mainly from case 3.1 and case 3.2, which deal with social media use at home and at school, and from the EMSOC survey (cf. 2. Social media use and experience in Flanders).

- As social media are inextricably linked to the lives of young people it is important for teachers as well as for parents to stay aware of key developments in social media.
- Young people generally have relatively good technical competencies, but lower cognitive competencies. Encourage young people to think (critically) about how social media works, their own behaviour on social media, and the behaviour of others.
- These good technical competencies are often limited to only a few basic online activities. Introduce more complex activities to students or children, who may then become competent in more activities and carry on these activities to their friends. This way the vicious circle of only doing what they are already able to do, can be broken.
- The important difference between personal data and user data is unclear to most Flemish people. As these types of data are being treated differently and may fall within different regulations, it is important to teach children about these differences.
- Be aware that setting strict rules sometimes has a counter-productive effect. Provide young people with guidance and exchange in an open and constructive manner, encouraging their own



thoughts about their experiences with social media. Give young people sufficient freedom to develop the necessary technical social media competencies. An important observation regarding technical social media competencies of children is that they mainly seem to learn them in practice, if they get enough freedom to experiment. At the same time, warnings and guidance are highly effective for children's development of cognitive competencies.

- When cautioning children, stress both the positive and the negative sides of social media.
- Taking the motto 'unknown is unloved', experiment with the possibilities of social media. Schools may also organise sessions for teachers to encourage them to learn about social media. These sessions should go beyond the technical aspects of social media and also didactically support teachers, for example through the appointment of a media coach, who can offer targeted support and function as a central point of contact concerning media literacy at school for teachers as well as for school directors.
- Let young people help and advise you in setting up an account and using social media, as this will give you insights into how social media work as well as into how children use social media. Counter pupils' facile reading preferences and learn them to expand their cultural horizons by experimenting with new media forms, presenting inspiring examples, showing great enthusiasm.
- When using social media to build pupil's literacy skills, take great care to balance participation and control. Though a certain level of control is inevitably necessary at first, that protective attitude should gradually make place for a supportive attitude.



4. Social media at work

In this second theme, we focus on the use of social media at work. Not only young people but also adults are affected by the societal implications of social media use and this is certainly true in their professional lives. In our contemporary society, characterized by a growing use of social media, employees are increasingly expected to be proficient with new and social media of all kind. At the same time, some employees serve as ‘trainers’ for other people.

The first case is situated in the library context. In the second case we look at Twitter use by public servants. Lastly, we discuss a case concerning writers and Twitter. We provide recommendations for policy and organisations based on the research done in the three case studies.

4.1. MediaCoach: central figures in the library

The MediaCoach project is a training track for everyone who professionally works with adolescents (e.g. librarians, teachers, youth workers). MediaCoach is aimed at enhancing knowledge of and skills to use social media. Within EMSOC, we focused on librarians and the role they can play as a mediacoach within the library as an organisation (Vanwynsberghe, Boudry, Vanderlinde, & Verdegem, 2014). We investigate the state of social media literacy amongst colleagues and whether the presence of a social media expert enhances or hinders information exchange about social media and the use of the social media sites within the library.

We find that the mediacoaches are the central actors in the dissemination of social media literacy as they pass on the most information about social media within the library. The MediaCoach project stimulates the social media experts to communicate about social media with their colleagues. The information exchange takes place through informal conversation as well as through workshops. Strikingly though, this exchange of social media information is mostly limited to a smaller group of colleagues who are already social media savvy. In that view, the mediacoach may well hinder the diffusion of social media literacy. The extent to which mediacoaches help in enhancing social media literacy within the library also depends on their position and function within that library: mediacoaches with educational functions tend to focus on training and workshops whereas experts with communicative functions tend to disseminate their knowledge through more informal channels. Negative attitudes, lack of knowledge and skills may cause some colleagues to be excluded from the communication process. It is important that everyone gets involved in social media training and workshops. Establishing a social media policy together with the whole team may counter this exclusion.

4.2 Public servants and Twitter use

Governments’ increasing use of social media inevitably impacts the relationship between the state and



its citizens, as social media allow for new ways of communicating for both citizens and governments. A lot of governmental institutions are confronted with the challenge of how to optimally use social media to communicate with citizens. Institutions greatly vary in the extent to which guidelines for this use of social media are set out. Sometimes there are clear rules on which civil servants may use which social media profiles, sometimes there is a social media policy with guidelines for all employees, but other organisations have no guidelines or are still experimentally developing them without any clear rules.

In this case we focus on the use of Twitter by Flemish civil servants. We look at which factors specific to the work context (e.g. social media guidelines, the extent to which social media use is part of the job description) impact how civil servants use Twitter (Boudry, Vlieghe, Vanwynsberghe, Rutten & Verdegem, 2014).

We distinguish three Twitter profiles: the amateur tweeter, the beginner tweeter and the professional tweeter. The amateur tweeter has average technical, cognitive and emotional competencies for using Twitter. He or she mainly logs on to Twitter for private use. The average amateur tweeter is female and 40 years old. The second user profile, the beginner tweeter, has rather low technical and cognitive competencies but a positive attitude (i.e. high emotional competencies). He or she is motivated to use Twitter but lacks the skills and knowledge to do so. The beginner tweeter uses Twitter for private purposes, is female and 43 years old. The last user profile is the professional tweeter. He or she has high technical, cognitive and emotional competencies and uses Twitter very often for both private as well as professional reasons. The average professional tweeter is male and 38 years old. These last users may be put forward as 'mediacoaches' (cf. 4.1 MediaCoach: central figures in the library) within their organisations in order to stimulate and guide the social media use of their colleagues.

In our study we also find that some contextual factors may impact how civil servants use Twitter. First of all, effort expectancy may have an effect in the sense that those who find it easy to learn how to use Twitter are more likely to belong to the professional tweeter profile. Frequency of use also appears to be relevant: those who less frequently use Twitter are less likely to use it for professional purposes. In addition, the existence of a social media policy may lead to social media being used less often for professional purposes, as civil servants may feel scared of doing something wrong. Another finding is that those who voluntarily use Twitter more often use it for professional purposes, and are more motivated to use Twitter in a good way. Lastly, older employees don't use Twitter professionally as often as do younger employees.

4.3 Writers at the Twitter Fiction Festival

This case focuses on producers of literary work (i.e. writers) and their engagement in the *2012 Twitter Fiction Festival*. We examine the claim that social media are making literary communication practices more social and focus specifically on the process of writing. The claim can also be understood as a contestation of the common perception of literary practices as activities performed and enjoyed in solitude. Indeed, prototypical examples of literary communication often take place in a social context and include literary festivals, poetry nights, author readings, book clubs, parents and teachers reading



to children as well as the more formal writers' workshops. These events and practices are often marked as "authentic", suggesting that literature is supposed to be performed in a social context. Furthermore, literature also has a socializing function that enables people to gain insight into the practices and understanding shared by society. To examine the claim, this case identifies what type of literary communication practices emerge in social media environments, particularly in relation to literary production, and analyzes how users describe and interpret their engagement in these practices.

We find that writers feel limited by the labels "author" and "writer", solely targeted at the production of written texts. Participants in the study prefer to replace them by alternative labels such as "artist" and "player", which are more in line with their actual storytelling practices on social media. The participants compare and describe their experiences and contrast them with traditional views on writing as a solitary and disciplined activity. They define their activities as the writing of fragmented stories, developing of narrative structures, the creating of interactive reading experiences and the experimenting with rules about media forms, literary genres, writing styles and partnerships. Tweeting is presented as a challenging but pleasant revival of fragmented writing and storytelling as a performance. The participants' experiences in the Twitter environment contribute to a transformation in their perception of storytelling, changing it from writing for a distant and imagined audience, to performing for a live and responsive group of recipients.

4.4 Recommendations

4.4.1. Policy

The recommendations below are mainly inspired by case 4.3 about writers and their use of Twitter. Within this case, our participants clearly emphasized a role of policy concerning the conceptualization of writers and cultural literacy.

- Develop a holistic strategy to increase the levels of social media literacy of the Flemish population, specifically the working population. This could include awareness-raising campaigns, concerning for example online privacy related items or safety issues. However, it is relevant that efforts are made beyond awareness-raising campaigns toward other concrete and permanent measures and interventions that can have a long-lasting effect on the social media literacy levels of the working population.
- One way to go beyond awareness-raising is making use of a mediacoach. It is important that this central figure within organisations is adequately informed and trained to efficiently spread social media related information and help enhance social media literacy among colleagues. Therefore, governments should stimulate training programs for these experts to be implemented in organisations (e.g. MediaCoach).
- Try to reach parents to educate them about social media through stimulating initiatives at the workplace. This could also ensure a higher level of parental involvement by making it easier for working parents to attend information sessions and the like.
- Pay more attention to social media usage as a form of cultural participation and provide structural support for it (e.g. subsidiary support for cultural initiatives on social media, a help desk).



Traditional forms of cultural participation appear to be declining (Eurobarometer, 2013). Online cultural participation, however, rising. Regardless, this online participation is conceptualized in a very narrow way. A new conceptualisation of what cultural participation (and literacy) implies should include online media culture, especially social media culture.

- Focus on the recognition and development of new forms or art instead of being led by traditional labels such as “author” and “writer” which can become restrictive. This is particularly important to consider when drafting and approving policy documents related to subsidizing the Arts.

4.4.2. Employers

Based on case 4.1 and 4.2 we formulate recommendations for organisations dealing with social media. Although case 4.1 was oriented toward libraries and case 4.2 toward public servants, we believe these general points apply to all kinds of organisations who at one point are confronted with social media use by their employees.

- Check whether someone within the organisation is familiar with social media and can thus take a steering role concerning social media use. Lived experiences provide interesting learning opportunities for other colleagues.
- Find someone within your organisation who can take on the role of a social media coordinator. The presence of such a social media expert has a positive effect on the information exchange of social media among other employees and makes that other colleagues know to whom to ask questions.
- Give these social media coordinators, and other employees, enough freedom to use social media during work and thus enable them to develop essential social media competencies.
- Be aware that a policy that is too strict, as well as no social media policy at all, can have an inhibitory effect in employees’ social media competencies. A social media policy must contain guidelines in preference of restrictive rules (e.g. recommendations)
- Social media play an increasingly important part in the work context. Openly discuss the role of social media for your organisation and try to be open to the changes implementing social media may cause.
- Don’t try to avoid these changes social media bring with them. Try to stay up to date about major developments rather than neglecting them.
- Learn from other organisations, from within your field and from other fields, nationally as well as internationally. Take a look at their ways of employing social media and dare to experiment.



5. Conclusion

With this report we provided an overview of studies on social media literacy within different user groups and contexts, using different methods and yielding different results. Both qualitative and quantitative studies were used to map out social media literacy in Flanders. Although it is not our aim (nor possible) to mutually compare the case studies, taken together they give us a lot of interesting insights in how young people at home and at school, as well as employers and employees, deal with social media.

Even though we found promising results for some of the youngsters, parents, teachers, employers and employees, others are still lagging behind as regards their social media literacy competencies and initiatives. Based on the recommendations we extracted from the case studies and EMSOC survey, we hope that the diverse user groups can each find a way to enhance social media literacy in either the home, school or work context.



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