The course in social media skills being developed in the “Be digital” project is directed toward adult learners age 50 and up living in Lithuania, Latvia, Norway and Iceland. This analysis will therefore focus on the needs of learners in this geographical area and this age group. Each team has undertaken a trend analysis in their own countries and surveyed employers and employees about their social media needs. The most important findings are presented here along with some best practice examples.

Global perspectives
In order to understand the global context of social media skills, it is important to mention two key international concepts: UNESCO’s Media Information and Literacy and the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens. Both of these concepts have been widely adapted throughout Europe and can be identified in some form in many countries’ national policies. Digital policy is constantly evolving, as the rate of digitalization increases globally. While social media skills may make up a relatively small part of these concepts, social media often has profound impact on active citizenship and behavior: the way we live, the way we learn, and the way we do business.

Social media skills are an integral part of UNESCO’s Media Information and Literacy concept, and have been interpreted and implemented to varying degrees in national plans for media and digital competences. MIL is a complex concept proposed by UNESCO in 2007 consisting of three components:

- information literacy
- media literacy
- digital literacy


In accordance with UNESCO’s definition, Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is:

- a set of competencies that empowers citizens to access, retrieve, understand, evaluate and use, create as well as share information and media content in all formats, using various tools, in a critical, ethical and effective way in order to participate and engage in personal professional and societal activities. This means that a 'media and information literate person must not only be a consumer of information and media content, but also a responsible information seeker, knowledge creator and innovator, who is able to take advantage of a diverse range of information and communication tools and media'.

Social media literacy (SML) can therefore be understood as the:

- specific set of technical, cognitive and emotional competencies that are required when using social media to search for information, for communication, content creation and for problem-avoiding and problem-solving, both in professional and social contexts.
The European Commission has established The European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens and identified five key areas and 21 competences. The Framework’s five key areas are information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety and problem solving. Social media skills play a part in each of these five areas, perhaps most noticeably in communication and collaboration. This framework has also be interpreted by many European countries and implemented in national plans for digital skills in lifelong learning.

**Lithuanian context**

In Lithuania over the last years, there has been a growing interest in media and information literacy among different stakeholders. In the Lithuania's Progress Strategy 2030 [http://www.lietuva2030.lt/], adopted by the Lithuanian Parliament in 2012, Media and Information Literacy (MIL) education is underlined as a prerequisite for the development of a vibrant public sphere, responsible media and a democratic and sustainable society.

While national policy measures with regard to MIL education are still in development, in Lithuania many media literacy initiatives of various scales are being implemented by different stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia institutions, organisations and networks, most of them implement MIL education activities on the project basis.

A number of different media and information literacy networks operate in Lithuania. The most noteworthy are those that have made and keep making the biggest change in MIL education, such as:

- **Association 'Langas į ateitį'** (Window to the future) - a Lithuanian non-profit initiative launched in 2002 by socially responsible private business companies promoting the use of internet in Lithuania, encouraging society to safely use ICT in their everyday life and in this way stimulating the growth of the living standard of Lithuanian citizens for successful implementation of ICT training projects. ‘Langas į ateitį’ initiated the establishment of Public Internet Access Points (PIAP) in public libraries - over 1200 PIAP with free internet access are on function at present; over 100 000 adults participated in ICT basics training courses;

- **National Digital Coalition (NDG) of Lithuania** ([skaitmeninekoalicija.lt](http://skaitmeninekoalicija.lt)) – formed by institutions, companies and organisations to increase employment by promoting ICT knowledge and achieve more effective use of the digital potential by cooperation in implementing information society development programme Digital Agenda for Lithuania 2014-2020 ([https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/Lt/TAD/033ccce007c411e687e0fbad81d55a7c?jfwid--33jzae4dj](https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/Lt/TAD/033ccce007c411e687e0fbad81d55a7c?jfwid--33jzae4dj)). NDG is running the following activities related to MIL education of adults: training of low skilled and re-training of 5,000 people; nomination of 300 digital champions in the communities; broadening the awareness raising during EU campaigns (Get Online Week, Coding week, Girls in ICT, Safer Internet Day, etc.) reaching 30,000 people; organising 3 yearly events which encourage to use the online learning content – lifelong learning, open sources; developing 250 e-scouts networks in public libraries – intergenerational programmes; broadening national campaigns on safe internet and e-services usage protecting private data targeted to 30,000 people.

The above mentioned initiatives are targeted at the development of digital skills in general, without specific attention to social media management competencies for work. Therefore, it becomes a concern for employees and employers themselves, i.e. the learning/ upskilling in social media management has to be linked to the specific economy sectors and/ or positions and/ or take place as on-the-job training. The Lithuanian training market offers a wide range of training on social media management skills for specific occupations, such as marketing, branding, communication and PR. However, these options do indeed appear
to be quite limited in their content and reliability, in most cases at a relatively high cost, while open courses either do not exist or are highly fragmented.

The situation should change with the promise of the Lithuanian Minister for Education, Science and Sports to start introducing social media training in schools, and to train about 1,000 educators for this purpose in 2020.

**Norwegian context**

In Norway, the government has placed special focus on improving the digital skills of seniors, immigrants and unemployed people with the program “Digidel” from 2017 – 2019. The program was a cooperation project between stakeholders in the public, private and volunteer sectors and financed by the government. The main goal of these programs is to enable citizens to use public online services and welfare technology.

While government programs focus mainly on basic digital skills, much of learning in Norway occurs at the workplace. Employers and employees’ unions play a large part in upskilling employees. A survey undertaken in 2017 by four of these organizations (ICT Norway, NITO, Tekna and Abelia) found that 44% of people over 55 believed that their digital skills were insufficient for their current positions.

Industries are often organized into clusters, and coursing makes up a large part of clusters’ activities. In industries like hotel, restaurant and retail, digital media courses are frequent, well-attended and hold a high standard. However, these are often short courses (one day or less) with a specific focus on for example video editing or Facebook ads.

**Latvian context**

In Latvia, the Mass Media Policy Guidelines of Latvia 2016-2020 and implementation plan, the first of their kind, were established in 2016. The Ministry of Culture implements measures for the development of media literacy in cooperation with other institutions, non-governmental organisations and representatives of the sector. However, it should also be noted that the inclusion of the matter of critical thinking and media literacy in the content of formal education is within the competence of the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Centre for Education.

The main objective of the Latvian media policy is the creation of a strong, diverse, professional, transparent, sustainable and stable media environment in which nationally, regionally and locally the top quality, content relevant to the Latvian public interest and common good contributes to the reflection of the basic values fixed in the Constitution and its introduction in the national media space, the priorities of the Latvian language are balanced interests of the industry, the audience has access to independent and reliable information and knowledge to use it.

The aim of the media policy guidelines is to create conditions conducive to media activity, ensuring and developing media diversity, improving the education of professionals in the media sector, raising the quality and accountability of the media environment, promoting media literacy and promoting a media and media environment for the individual and society.

Mass media policy guidelines include five action lines for strengthening of the Latvian mass media environment. One of those is devoted to the promotion of media literacy.

1. Diversity of the media environment
2. Media quality and responsibility
3. Education of professionals of the media sector
4. Media literacy
5. Securitability of the media environment.


Icelandic context

It is estimated that about 91 percent of Icelandic people use social media. Social network participation includes activities such as creating a user profile, posting messages or other contributions to social networks. The spread of digital is having a massive impact on the labour market and the type of skills needed in the economy and society. The main policies for social media skills in Iceland are to make digitalization for everybody, to strengthen digital skills for the labour force, to develop high level skills for ICT professionals and to transform teaching and learning of digital skills in a lifelong learning perspective, including the training of teachers and other school staff.

There are many courses in using social media in Iceland, but most of them focus on marketing through social media. Marketing companies offer variety of courses and services with the goal of helping companies to gain attention and create content. It is also possible to go to open courses at the universities about the nature of social media, management of social media etc.

Social Media Trends

New platforms are constantly emerging, and popularity varies according to age group and nationality. While Facebook is still clearly the most used social media platform in the target countries, its popularity is decreasing rather than increasing. Recent years have seen the rise of video on social media, and according to DataReportal’s Global Digital Snapshot 2019; 2020 will likely see a rise in voice interfaces and gaming. As of January 2019, globally the most active social platforms were Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, FB Messenger, Wechat and Instagram.

DataReportal has collected statistics per country to come up with a comprehensive overview of global social media usage. Looking at our target countries, in January 2019 the active social media users as a percentage of the total population was 83% in Iceland, 71% in Norway, 55% in Lithuania and 51% in Latvia.

In Norway, Facebook is still the clear leader in social media advertising with an audience of 3.6 million, followed by 2.8 million on Snapchat, 2.4 on Instagram and 1.9 on LinkedIn. In Iceland, Facebook leads with an audience of 260,000 followed by LinkedIn (220,000) and Instagram with 170,000. In Latvia, Facebook is again the clear leader with an audience of 900,000 followed by Instagram with 510,000 and LinkedIn with 300,000.

In Iceland, in addition to Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram; Snapchat and Twitter are increasing in popularity. In many workplaces there has been a tendency to consider social media as a threat to productivity and focus of the employees. In recent years, however, this tendency is decreasing, and employers are getting used to the idea that social media is a part of people’s life.

Regular surveys are taken regarding social media and internet usage in Lithuania. According to “Gemius Baltic” internet users research data, in 2018 Facebook was the most popular social network among all age groups. 15-24 year olds are the leader in 9 out of 11 social networks. Fewer people in this age group have their personal profiles only on LinkedIn, where the majority is comprised of 25- to 34-year-olds, and Viber
has more personal profiles for 25- to 44-year-olds. (source: https://www.gemius.lt/visos-naujienos/kiek-zmoniu-lietuvoje-is-tiesu-naudojasi-socialiniais-tinklais.html):


- Facebook: 1.6 million
- Instagram: 630 thousand
- Twitter: 132.5 thousand
- Snapchat: 337.5 thousand
- LinkedIn: 390 thousand
- In Latvia, according to the results of the CSB survey on use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in households the number of people using the internet on a regular basis (at least once a week) is rising every year. At the beginning of 2018, 81.2 % of the population used the internet regularly, which is 18.7 percentage points more than in 2010.


According to various research data, Facebook is the most popular social network in Latvia across all age groups:
Social media audience profiles by age are quite similar in Lithuania, Latvia and Norway. Social media audience profiles in January 2019 for Latvia, Lithuania and Norway according to DataReportal (The Social Media Audience Profile was not available for Iceland):
When looking at the Latvian social media audience profile, it is possible to see that audience in the 50+ age group are not as active users of social media as in Lithuania or Norway.

The social media picture in Norway is relatively diffuse, which complicates the strategy for businesses trying to reach customers or any organization trying to reach out with a message. Instead of a few primary mass distribution channels, consumers have thousands of contact points, and many businesses competing for their attention. The average Norwegian checks their mobile phone more than 150 times a day (Deloitte Media Survey 2017) and they expect a good user experience. A 2018 survey by Carat Media found that Norwegians spend on average 83 minutes a day on social media. Seniors spend on average 24 minutes.

In Norway, Facebook is still the most popular platform, but usage is actually dropping (from 79% daily use in 2017 to 74% in 2018, Social Media Tracker 2018, Kantar Media). There is a strong tendency of usage moving away from status posts and toward Facebook Messenger.

Norwegians’ weekly use of social media, according to the Carat survey 2018: Facebook, 88%; Youtube, 69%; Snapchat, 59%, Instagram 43%; LinkedIn, 35%; Twitter, 27%.

On the job social media usage also involves tracking data through tools like Google Analytics, which is commonplace. GDPR has added a further complication to marketing, and there is a high degree of awareness of the risks of violating GDPR. These require skills which older employees using social media in the workplace must acquire, develop and maintain.

Survey of employees
A survey of employees was created to assess the level of knowledge of social media in employees aged 50+ as well as their perception of how important social media is to their current job and career prospects. The survey was distributed through the partners’ emailing lists, Facebook, LinkedIn and through various electronic newsletters. The survey was distributed in English in Iceland, Norway and Lithuania and in Latvian in Latvia. For this reason, the responses from Latvia are treated separately while the responses for Iceland, Norway and Lithuania are combined (shortened to IS/LT/NO). There were 77 respondents in the collective survey, and 35 responses from Latvia alone.
1. Importance of social media tools in the workplace

Participants were asked to rank social media tools in order of importance for their respective workplace, on a six-point scale where they in addition could choose not in use at all. It is very clear from the survey that Facebook is still overwhelmingly the most important social media tool for the workplace.

IS/LT/NO

Please rank the following social media tools in order of importance for your workplace where column one is most important, column six is least important and column seven is not relevant at all to your workplace:

LV

2. Tools that employees believe they need to improve

Participants were asked in which tools they most need to improve their skills for the workplace, on a six-point scale where they in addition could choose not in use at all. Again, Facebook is in great demand but participants also see a significant need for more knowledge about LinkedIn and Instagram.
Responses were not collected for this question in the Latvian version.

3. Assessment of own skills

Respondents were asked to assess their own skills in social media for the workplace on a scale of 1 – 6 with 1 being most poor and 6 being excellent. Results show that the majority of respondents believe their skills to be above average. The Latvian respondents are especially satisfied with their social media skills, with a high percentage rating their skills as very good or excellent.
4. Google Analytics

Questions four and five rated respondents’ use of Google Analytics specifically. Google Analytics is a complex tool and it was important to the team to find out how much time should be devoted to Analytics in the course. 44.2% of respondents in Iceland, Norway and Lithuania and only 29.4% of respondents in Latvia use Google Analytics at work, and the majority of respondents rate their knowledge of Analytics as very low or extremely low.

IS/LT/NO

How would you rate your knowledge of Google Analytics?

LV

Kā Jūsu kopumā vērtējiet savas prasmības darbā ar sociālajiem medijiem?

35 responses
5. Facebook advertising

In questions 6 and 7, respondents were asked about their use and knowledge of Facebook advertising, again for the team to assess how much time should be devoted to this complex tool as a part of the course. 59.7% of respondents from Iceland, Norway and Lithuania and 54.3% from Latvia use Facebook advertising at work, and there is a fairly even distribution of perceived knowledge of the tool.

IS/LT/NO

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6. Specific skills – independent of platform

Specific skills that respondents would most like to learn are: creating an editing videos, social media for education & inhouse training, and data protections, privacy and security. There is also significant interest in creating communities using social media and social media ethics. The skill that is most often listed in addition to the skills on the survey, is social media content production.
The results of the survey for employees confirm that Facebook is clearly still the most important social media platform for the workplace, with Instagram coming in second. Snapchat and Twitter rank last for use in the workplace, and LinkedIn is of medium importance. Similarly, employees see the greatest need to improved their skills in Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. There are quite clear indications that the focus of the course should be on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn over Snapchat, Twitter and other social media platforms. Pinterest, Quora and YouTube have also been mentioned in the comment fields, and should be considered for inclusion in the course.
Survey of employers

A survey was created for employers to discover how much demand there is for social media skills in the workplace and what skills should be included in a course for employees. Thirty employers responded to the survey, so we should be careful in drawing too many conclusions solely based on the responses. However, the results do reinforce the findings from the survey of employees, emphasizing the importance of Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

1. Social media platforms

The survey found that 63% of employers run businesses or organizations that use Google Analytics and 70% use Facebook advertising. 43% of employers respond that they have dedicated staff for social media, which leaves a majority of employers without dedicated staff and therefore potential participants for a course in social media like the one envisioned in this project.

2. Company performance in social media

Employers were asked to rate their company’s performance in social media on a scale from 1 – 6 with 1 being the poorest and 6 being excellent. The results are quite varied:

IS/LT/NO

Overall, how would you rate your company or organization’s performance in social media?
23 responses
3. General skills – not platform dependent

A clear finding is that employers expect all employees to have knowledge of data protection, privacy and security as well as social media ethics, but there is also interest for the same types of skills that employees are interested in (in-house training, community building and to a lesser degree video creation and editing).

LV
Conclusions
As Internet usage and social media usage continues to increase, skills for social media in the workplace have a natural place in professional development. Surveys of employers and employees in the four target countries confirm larger global surveys of media usage. At the same time, a majority of employees in the four target countries find their social media skills to be relatively weak.

Facebook, although declining in many markets, is still the social media platform with the highest number of users, audience and advertising penetration. Video and sound are important skills for social media advertising, and YouTube is a medium which is attracting new users and which requires solid editing skills. The recent implementation of GDPR has increased focus on security and privacy. These are all skills which should be integrated into the Be Digital course.