

**MEDIA
EDUCATION IN
FIVE EUROPEAN
COUNTRIES**

**TEACHERS'
SURVEY
REPORT**



Erasmus+

**SLOVAKIA
PORTUGAL
GREECE
ITALY
SPAIN**



MEDIA EDUCATION AT SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN FIVE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report is to assess the results of a survey in which 500 teachers from five European countries were asked about their opinions on and experiences with Media Education at the secondary level. The survey was carried out within the Erasmus plus K2 project “Media Education: From passive consumers to active creators” (2014-2016), whose partners are five secondary schools from Slovakia, Portugal, Greece, Italy and Spain. The main goal of the survey was to identify, collect and evaluate attitudes and experiences of secondary education teachers with/in Media Education in involved countries and to compare and see possible national differences or similarities. The insights and observations we gained from this data confirm the importance of the topic we deal with in our project, and they have also helped us focus on the most important issue of our further work in our project, which is creating lesson plans for hands-on teaching of Media education. All the lesson plans created during the lifetime of the project are being gradually published on The European Media Education Lab website (www.europeanmediaeducationlab.com), which is the final output of the project.

KEY WORDS

Media Education, questionnaire, teacher, national differences, national similarities, Erasmus plus

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Erasmus plus K2 project “Media Education: From passive consumers to active creators” set its main goal in creating an online bank of materials and lesson plans for teaching hands-on Media Education. Taking into consideration not having any experience in teaching it, the coordinators and teachers involved in this project realised the need to obtain some input information which would help them focus their work in the right direction.

The idea of starting the project with the survey among teachers of secondary education arose at the very beginning of writing the project application. This reasonable demand was put forward especially with regard to the number of countries involved in the project and their diversities. We felt the urge and necessity to obtain some insights into possible differences in interests, opinions and experiences of the teachers from our five countries. Moreover, we expected to attain some tangible



data about the usefulness of the topic we decided to deal with and about the issues to be highly avoided or supported if our work is to be of substantial contribution to the field of Media Education.

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

METHOD

The methodological design of this investigation was based on a quantitative survey. This technique aimed to obtain data about subjective aspects (opinions, attitudes and experiences) based on the information from individual responses. To carry out this study we developed a joint English version of the questionnaire with 21 questions which consisted of 15 multiple choice and 6 rating scale questions. Afterwards, the questionnaire was translated into all five languages (Slovak, Portuguese, Greek, Italian and Spanish) so any teacher could take part in the survey and not only those who have a fair knowledge of English.

The questionnaire was then published online via the Survey Monkey platforms which allowed us to preset the maximum response count for each questionnaire so the same number of respondents was achieved by every country. The survey was carried out from the end of February, 2015 to the end of April, 2015.

PARTICIPANTS

The sample consisted of 500 teachers of the secondary level of education, 100 from each of the five countries involved in the project. There were 354 females and 146 males taking part in this survey. The majority of them were between the ages of 41 to 60. As for the years of teaching experience, most of the participants have more than 5 years of experience. The only significant difference can be found in Portugal where more than half of the respondents (53.1%) have more than 25 years of teaching experience.

SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT MEDIA EDUCATION

After having searched materials on Media Education (ME) in European countries and having written the reports concerning the status of Media Education in our five countries, we realised that one of the first questions to ask teachers should be about their familiarity with ME in general since it was

obvious that it is still not a subject sufficiently promoted at our educational institutions. The responses confirmed the expected: the majority of all respondents (60%) are either not at all familiar or not too familiar with ME in general (Figure 1.). The significant difference between the countries was found only in the responses of the Spanish teachers. 20 % of them claimed that they are very familiar with it while in other countries only from 1 to 6% stated the same.

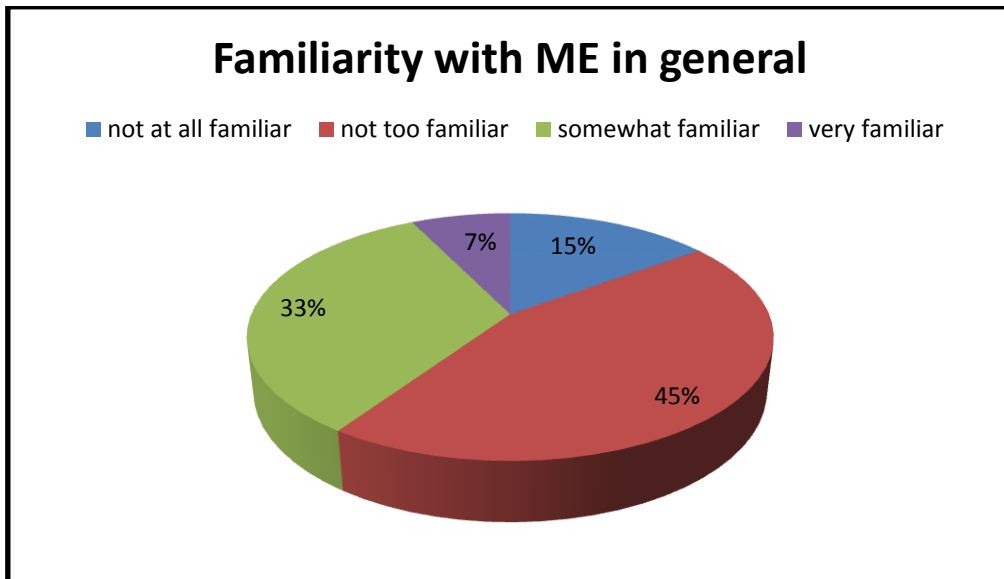


Figure 1.

The situation is even worse as far as the teachers' familiarity with their national ME content is concerned (Figure 2.). Up to 71% of the respondents are not at all familiar or not too familiar with it. Only 3% of all the teachers marked the “very familiar” option and in Italy and Slovakia there was only 1 person who was very familiar with the ME content in their country.

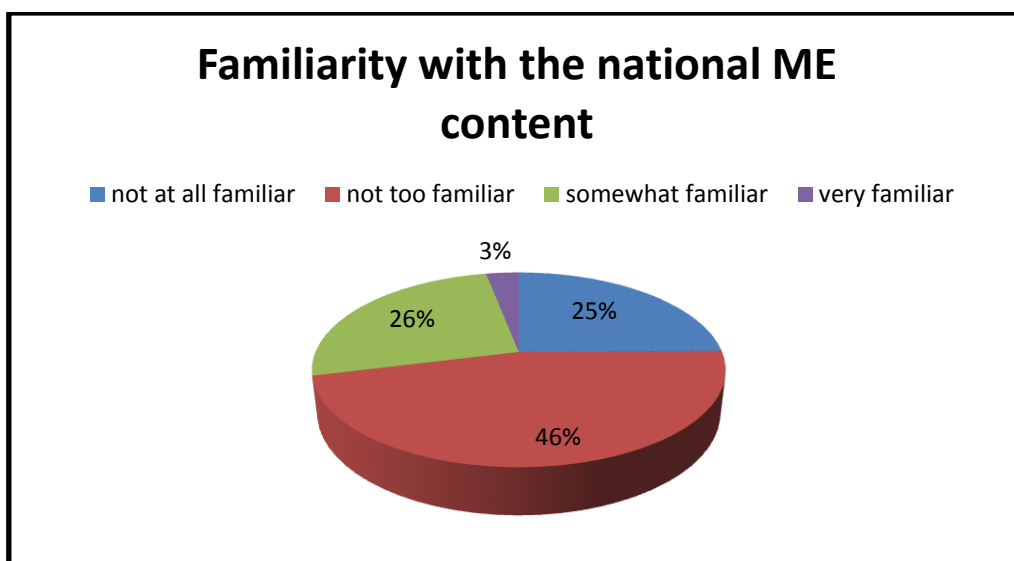
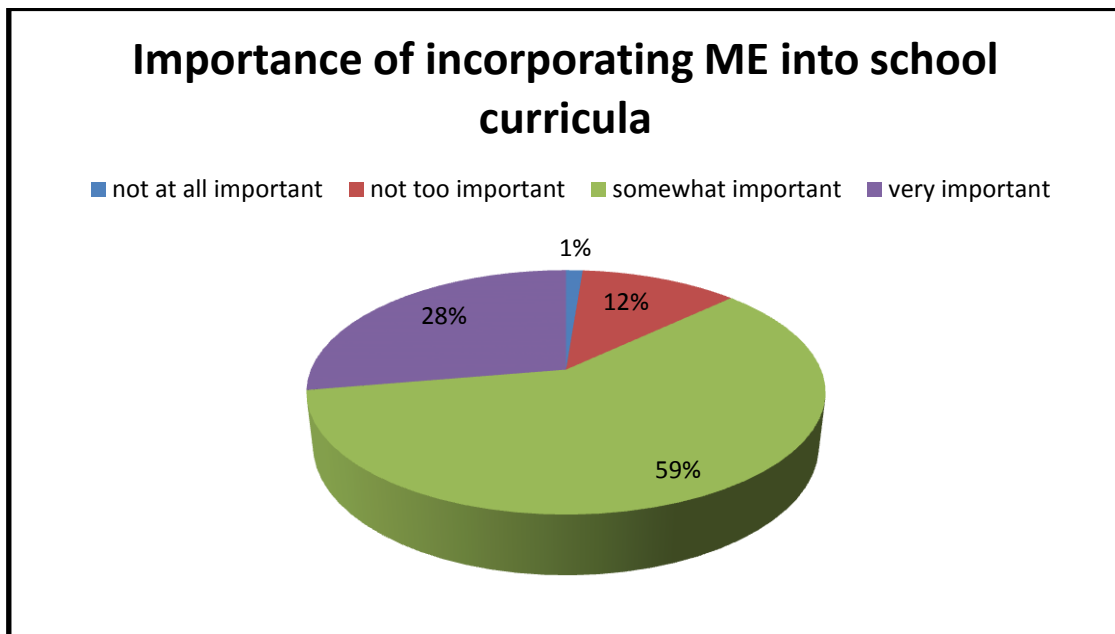


Figure 2.

The previous figures are in clear contradiction with another result (Figure 3.). Despite not being familiar with ME in general and with the content of ME in their countries, 87% of the respondents are convinced of the importance of its incorporating into school curricula. Only in Slovakia almost 30% of the teachers think that this issue is not too important.



Another question which we asked was about the Media Education status at their schools where we found remarkable differences between the countries which can be seen in Figure 4. One of the most striking results is the one about 53% of the Spanish teachers claiming that ME is established in their school as a stand-alone subject. The number is surprising mainly with regard to one of the latest quite critical report of Universidad de Murcia and Universidad de Valladolid* (http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/SPAIN_2014.pdf) (May,2014) which describes the implementation of ME in the classrooms as insufficient and mainly based on mere instrumental training in technological applications, without being the object of study. We would also like to point out another result concerning the issue which is the quite high percentage (46.3%) of responses from the Portuguese teachers who marked that ME is not part of their curriculum in any form at all, however, 79% of the same teachers think that incorporating ME into school curricula is important.

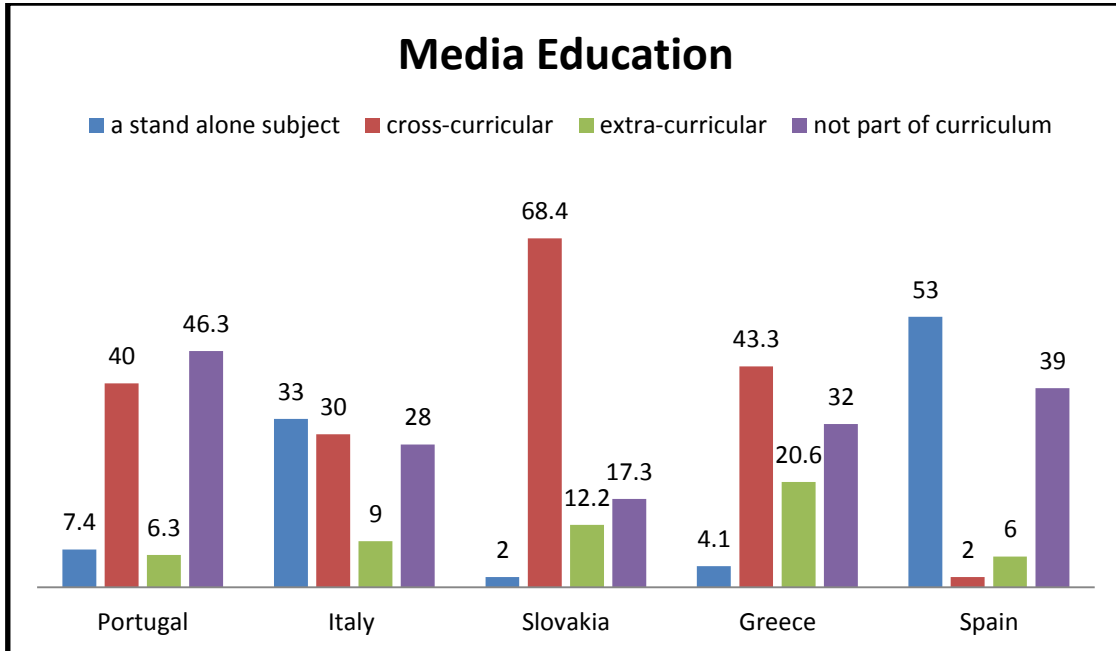


Figure 4.

EXPERIENCE WITH INTEGRATING MEDIA EDUCATION INTO THEIR TEACHING

Next three questions in the questionnaire dealt with the respondents' integrating ME into their teaching where the answer to the first question determined if they were supposed to answer next two. In almost all countries around half of the respondents marked that they personally integrate ME into their teaching and another half stated the opposite, but in Slovakia (65.3%) and, especially, in Spain a much larger number of the teachers (86%) responded positively.

The teachers who marked "yes" in the previous question continued with the response about the way they integrate it into their teaching. They could choose from three options, however, they could mark as many as applied: 1. theoretical approach by encouraging students' critical thinking about the role of media in their lives, 2. informative way by lecturing them on the influence of media in general, 3. practical way by producing some media (such as videos, podcasts, leaflets, websites, etc.). Figure 5. shows the results in percentage. As can be seen in the graph, the Greek teachers comfortably surpassed others in integrating ME practically into their teaching.

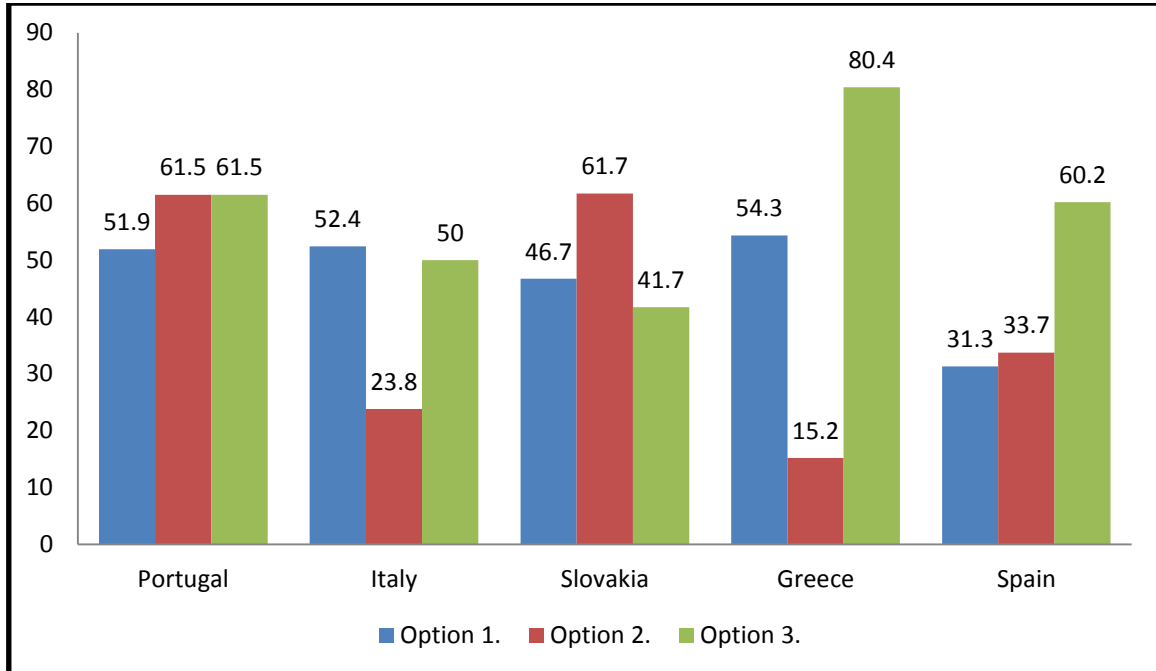


Figure 5.

As for the frequency of integrating ME into their teaching, the prevailing answers were between “occasionally” and “often”. There is only Spain standing out in this with its 23 out of 84 respondents claiming that they very often integrate ME into their teaching. However, this figure is not surprising at all taking into consideration the Spanish highest percentage (86%) of the respondents saying “yes” to the question about whether or not they incorporate ME into their teaching.

MEDIA EDUCATION TRAINING

The next set of four questions aimed at teacher training in Media Education in all five countries. In the first question we asked about their experience with any ME training. The responses of the Portuguese, Italian and Greek teachers were almost identical: up to 21% of them have had some training, the rest have had none. The situation in Spain is much better in that regard since more than half (51.5%) of the teachers have undergone some training. However, according to our survey Slovakia is by far the worst in their teachers’ participating in ME training with their 91.5% of the respondents marking “no”. Unfortunately, only after we collected data, did we realise that this kind of question needed some follow-up which would have helped us to obtain valuable and more detailed insight into this issue. Therefore, we cannot state if the reason for their not having had any training at all is because they have not been offered any training at all or they have not been willing to participate in the training offered to them so far. However, in another question we asked them if they would like to take part in ME training, which might shed some light on the previous results although this question deals more with the present and future than the past.

Referring to Figure 6., we can clearly see large differences between the countries. While we can say that in four countries most of the respondents are interested in ME training, half of the Slovak teachers who responded to our questionnaire are quite uncertain about it by choosing the option “I haven’t thought about it yet”. Contrary to that, the Spanish teachers are by far the most interested (86.6%) with just 5.2% of the respondents marking the negative answer. Quite significant result we can also see from the Greek teachers as only 1.1 % of them have no interest in it and only 23.7% haven’t thought about it yet.

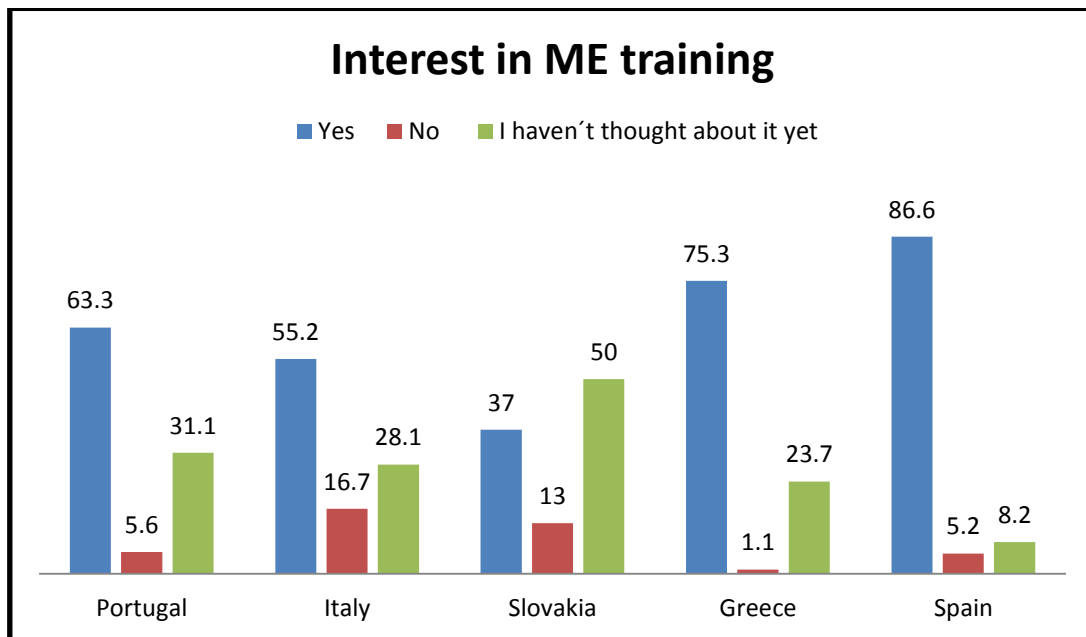


Figure 6.

The next figure shows that overall interest in Media Education training is quite remarkable in the five participating countries.

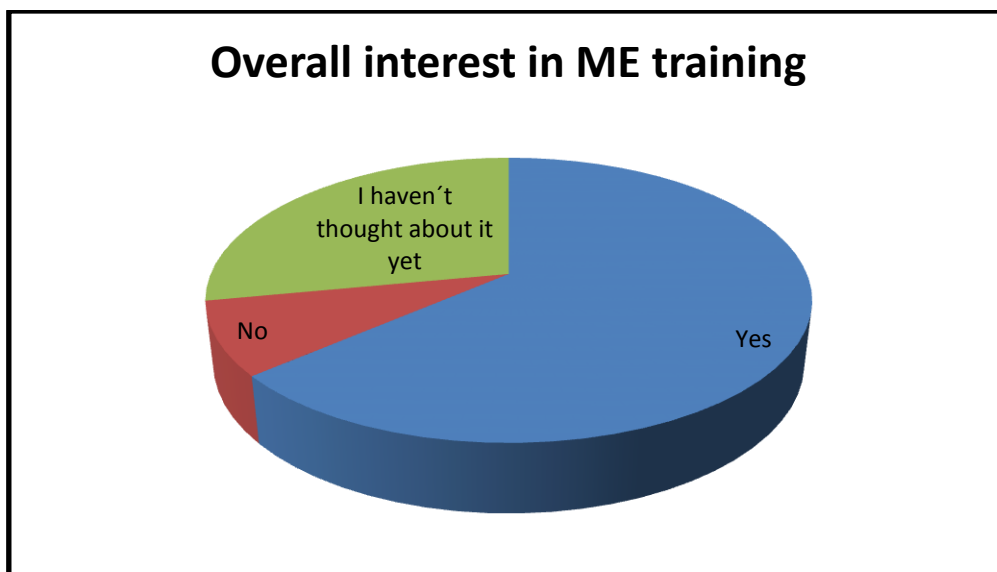


Figure 7.

The teachers who showed their interest in being ME trained continued with marking (as many as applied) the topics they would like to be trained in, which we had separated into 5 options:

1. Knowledge and understanding of media for democratic discourses and social participation.
2. Evaluation of media texts and sources.
3. Production and use of media.
4. Pedagogies in the teaching and learning of media literacy.
5. Other (please, specify:)

Option 3. together with option 4. came out as the most preferred topics for all the survey participants, especially in Spain where option 3. “Production and use of media” highly surpassed the other 3 options. Only one respondent out of all marked option 5., however, without specifying, so we have decided not to include this option into Figure 8.

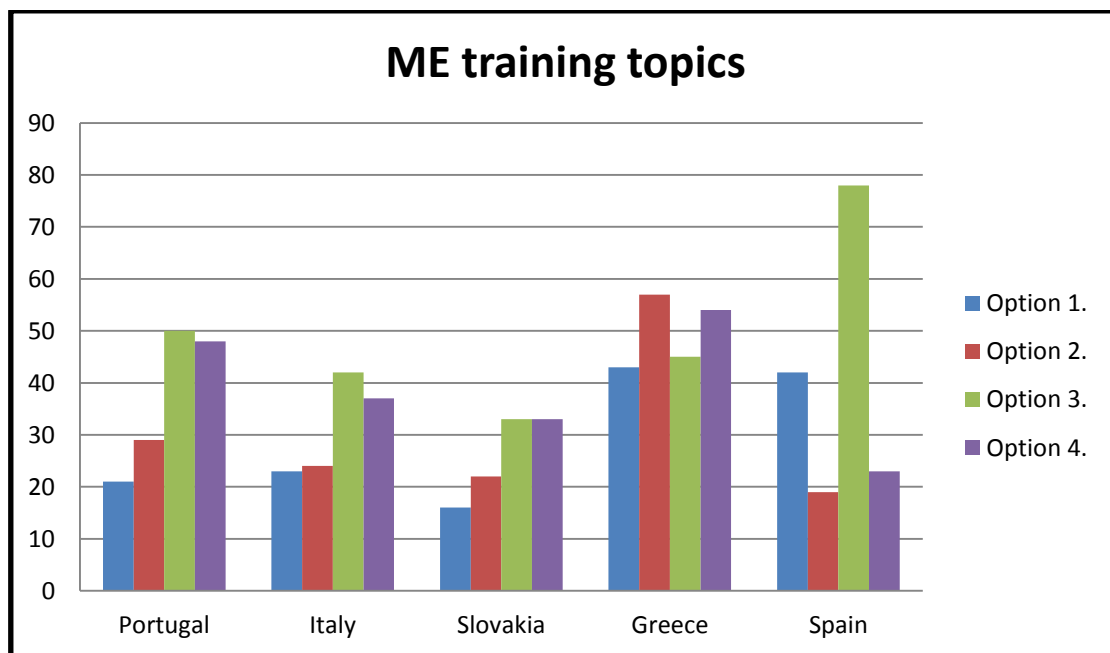


Figure 8.

The last question regarding to ME training aimed at finding out the level of satisfaction with their country’s strategies to provide for adequate teacher training in ME. The results are considerably alarming. In all five countries, most teachers rated the strategies as “poor” and more than a third of the Greek respondents believe that it is even “very poor”. The situation is slightly more positive in Slovakia and Portugal where a third of the teachers think that the strategies of their country in offering ME training are “satisfactory” (Figure 9.).

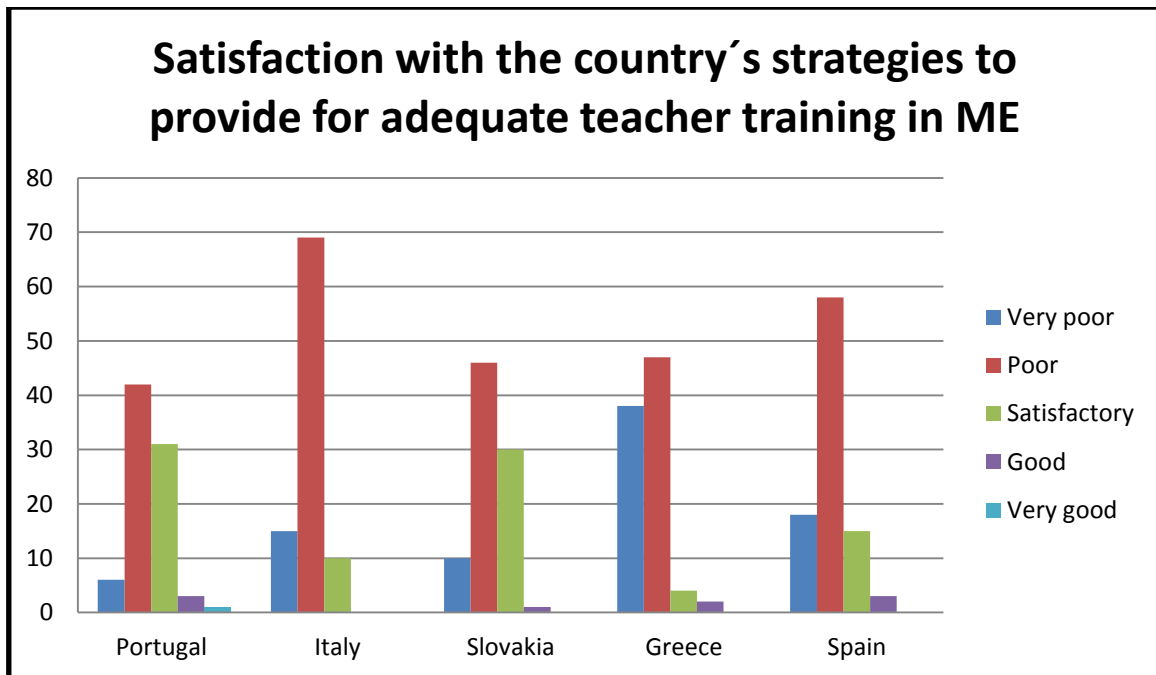


Figure 9.

As far as rating their own media literacy skills (Question 16.), apart from Spain almost half of the teachers from the other countries believe that their skills are “satisfactory”. However, another half of the Italian teachers is convinced of their skills being “poor”. Only a small number of all the teachers marked their skills as being either “very good” or the opposite: “very poor”.

HANDS-ON TEACHING OF MEDIA EDUCATION

This block of questions started with obtaining a quick insight into our respondents' willingness and confidence in producing different media forms. The respondents were supposed to mark as many as applied choosing from a variety of media forms. Figure 10. shows the overall results from all the countries together. As expected, photos and posters followed by leaflets and bulletins are media forms which are considered by most respondents the easiest to produce. The least confidence was found in producing short and animated films and radio programmes. It is also surprising to see that 20 out of 452 teachers who responded to this question claim that they cannot produce any of the above media forms.

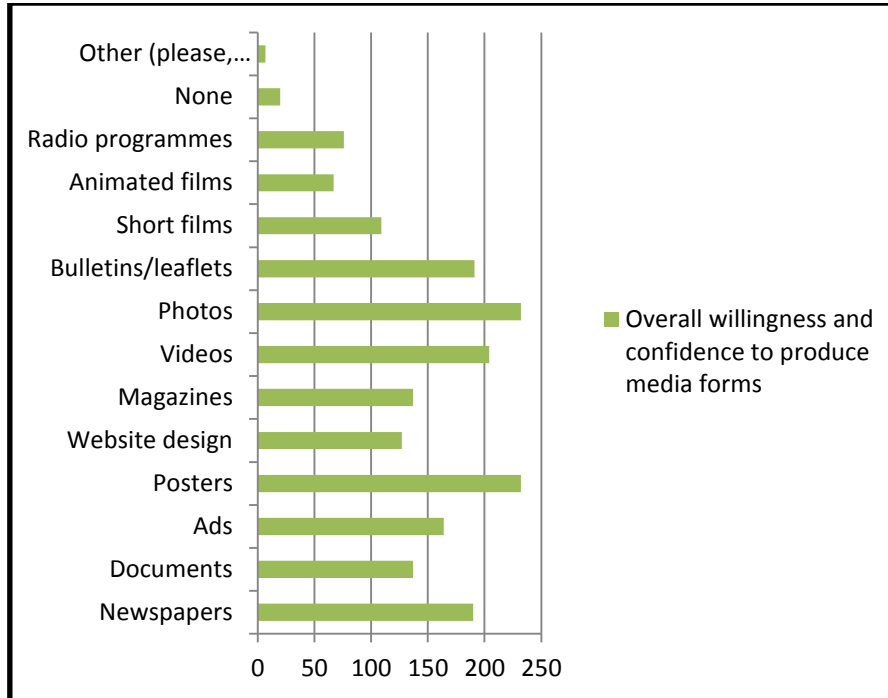


Figure 10.

In accordance with the main objective of the project within which this survey was conducted, the very last four questions of the survey were related to hands-on Media Education specifically. It is obvious that the majority of the teachers of all five countries are definitely interested in getting ideas on hands-on teaching of ME (Figure 11.). Great interest can be especially found in Spain, Greece and Portugal. Although in Slovakia and Italy still around half of the teachers feel the same way, at the same time in both countries over 40 % respondents “haven’t thought about it yet”.

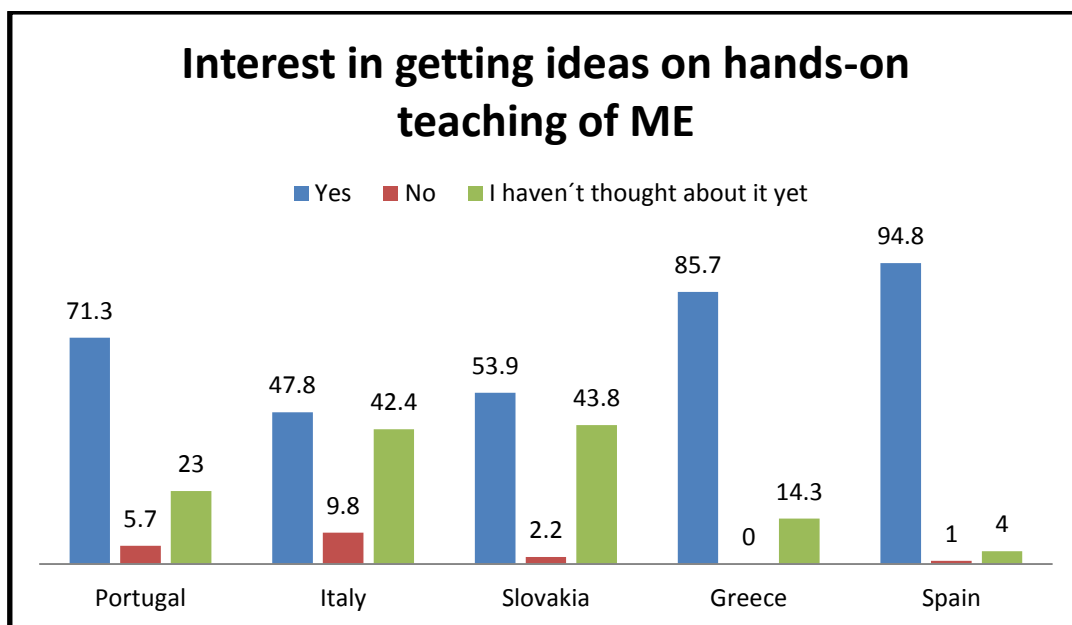


Figure 11.



Out of seven barriers in hands-on ME the respondents from all the countries agreed on “limitations of the technical equipment” being the major one especially in Greece and Spain where it reached 80%. “Lack of educational materials in the field of ME” comes second in Slovakia and Spain, reaching almost 50% in the other countries. Portugal and Greece consider “not having enough freedom to change the curricula”, as well as “lack of appropriate classrooms”, second important limitations in their teaching practical ME. “Too short lessons” were identified as a possible barrier by more than 40% in Slovakia and more than 48% in Spain. Slovakia is also the only country where quite a large number of respondents (43.2%) is afraid of “excessive distraction of students in front of media”.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF HANDS-ON MEDIA EDUCATION

Most of the teachers believe that the most significant advantage of hands-on ME is students’ engagement in the active learning process. Portugal, Greece and Slovakia see its positive side in generating critical and creative minds among students in the second place, while in Italy and Spain the option “makes teaching and learning more meaningful and fun” comes second. In Greece over 60% of the respondents marked other options as well: “helps students acquire the skills they need to be wise consumers of media and more active citizens”, “increases students’ ability and proficiency to express and disseminate their thoughts and ideas in a wide range of print and electronic forms” and “provides real life connections”. In all other countries the mentioned options obtained from 27% up to 56%.

The very last question of the survey dealt with the disadvantages of hands-on ME. The majority of the teachers in all countries see disadvantage mainly in reducing the already limited instructional time to develop the extended core content area and to prepare students for testing. However, for the Spanish teachers (70%) to “require an extra effort and time to keep up with the continual (social) media change” is the first on the list and it comes second for Portugal and Greece and third for Slovakia and Italy. It is quite interesting to see that the Slovak teachers are the only ones that consider raising students’ level of distraction the most serious drawback in hands-on ME while for others (apart from Italy) it is the least of a problem. Other noteworthy findings regard two countries: Portugal and Greece which both identified increasing the need for continual monitoring and regulation of device use in class and adding another content component to the overloaded curriculum as distinct disadvantages in practicing this way of ME teaching.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the previously presented findings we can conclude and recommend the following:

- There should be introduced a more intensive promotion of Media Education in all five countries since the results confirm the interest of the teachers in the topic, but their awareness of ME existence and their acquaintance with its content are considerably low.
- Although more than a third of respondents claimed that Media Education is not a part of their curricula at all, a prevailing number of the teachers consider the establishment of Media Education as a part of curricula of high importance.
- Despite not having sufficient support from the national authorities, most of the surveyed teachers incorporate Media Education into their teaching on their own and a majority of them do it in a practical way.
- The situation in Media Education training is not at all positive. Even if the results show great interest of the teachers to be trained in ME, up to the present not a sufficient number of them has experienced formal training in the area (especially in Slovakia where more than 91% claimed not having received any training at all). The majority of the teachers claim that their countries' strategies to provide for adequate teacher training in ME are poor or even very poor (Greece). According to our survey, the content of the training should be based on the activities connected with practical usage of media and on pedagogies in the teaching and learning of media literacy.
- There is a certain amount of valuable information this survey provided for our further work on our Erasmus plus project, as well. First of all, the results confirmed great interest in Media education among secondary school teachers. Moreover, we found out that they are especially interested in learning how to use and produce media and in the pedagogy of teaching media literacy, which goes in direct line with the focus of the project. Another important insight we obtained from the questionnaire data is about the marked disadvantages of and barriers in hands-on Media Education. Our designed teaching materials and lesson plans, therefore, must fulfil certain conditions so that as many obstacles in implementing hands-on ME as possible can be avoided:
 - the lesson plans and materials shouldn't be based on technical equipment not available in most secondary schools;
 - the lesson plans and materials should provide a thorough introduction and theoretical base so no further need or lack of information arises;
 - the lesson plans and materials should list and/or use applications that are easy to use so that teachers do not feel overwhelmed by continual media change;
 - the lesson plans and materials should deal with the topics of school curricula so that they can easily be integrated into already existing curricula as additional or supporting materials.