

HERMMES Report: Communicating our humanity: digital media and their (mis)use

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"One of the greatest challenges of our time is to help children and youngsters in the development of their media maturity and digital literacy. While digital technology is evolving every day, we are confronted with the fact that the children and young people in their care are using the technology and moving in virtual worlds that the adults responsible for them often struggle to comprehend. -

Therefore, parents, teachers and researchers have joined their resources, and aim to work towards helping children and youngsters become resilient and media mature citizens who can make their own informed choices on HOW they use digital technology." - [HERMMES](#)

"Communicating our humanity: digital media and their (mis)use"

As part of the HERMMES project that aims to bring awareness of the effects (digital) media has on childhood development and to offer healthy pathways for media education, a public conference was organised at the Waldorf Scuola Novalis in Conegliano. Tackling how our digitised society is challenging some of our core human and social abilities, the conference started with a panel discussion exploring the importance of "trust" as a very necessary human capacity in today's world and something that can only be developed through real experiences with the world and others. I was grateful to be given the opportunity to speak on behalf of early childhood education (IASWECE) and to share how a young child's early motor, bodily and sensory experiences in nature, through movement and play, and in living with others are essential in laying the foundations for this deep-rooted trust. These early experiences strengthen a child's resilience and ability to make wise choices in the future, including those related to the use of digital media. How trust as a much-needed human capacity can be furthered in children and youth was further explored from the point of view of student–teacher relations in the elementary and upper school and from the perspective of the family. More information on the lectures and workshops during this conference can be found [here](#).

The HERMMES project: what has been done so far?

To support parents, educators, and teachers in accompanying children and youth in their care towards becoming media-mature adults, the HERMMES project is developing a website, guidelines, and a curriculum for media education, and training models that are adaptable to the local realities.



HERMMES curriculum framework and guidelines:

A first draft of the HERMMES curriculum framework and guidelines is presently being reviewed by the two partner schools within the project from the perspective of practical research. Both documents will be reworked based on their comments and our aim is to have these documents ready by April 2024. There is still work to be done in developing a user-friendly format for those who are looking for a media curriculum. Now we are moving in the direction of providing a background document that includes key aspects of understanding media in relation to children's development and guidelines for educational settings. In addition, a media curriculum framework model is offered which will give guidance on what can be offered at each stage of development. To support educational settings that are required by their governments to integrate digital competences in their curriculum, the HERMMES curriculum framework is also linked to the 5 domains of the EU [DigComp 2.2](#) framework that is increasingly used as a guideline for educational policy in the EU member states. In addition, good practice examples are being collected that can serve as inspiration and support for families, educators, and teachers.

HERMMES training:

HERMMES partners responsible for developing media literacy training formed 3 sub-groups that will be responsible for developing training formats and content for parents, educators, teachers, teacher education and multipliers. A first test run of some facets of the training took place during a seminar in Ostrava at the end of October 2023 and other training formats will be tested with the two schools involved in the HERMMES project (Scuola Novalis and Wittering). Their feedback and our experience will be used to optimise the different training concepts and related content so that they can become available as a resource for those who need training on the topic of media or as support and inspiration for those who want to integrate it into their existing training.

At the Teacher Educators' colloquium organised by the Pedagogical Section in Dornach from 22-24 September 2023, it became clear that the topic of digital media and its impact on child development and teacher education is something that needs to be addressed. The HERMMES partners hope that they will be able to reach out to a wide network of trainers during the

International Teacher Education Conference Education that will take place between 17 and 21 April 2024 to share their findings and receive valuable feedback and input.

A clear description of the different HERMMES projects and its partners is available on the HERMMES website <https://hermmes.eu> and the results of the different projects will be published there once they are ready to be launched.



Clara Aerts has worked for more than 20 years as a Steiner Waldorf kindergarten teacher and as teacher educator in Flanders, Belgium and around the globe. She was active as a member of the IASWECE Coordinating Group for many years and is currently the HERMMES project coordinator, on behalf of the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education.