There is no national strategy on media literacy and safe use of new media, but the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is responsible for national policy on media. The national government helps parents and educators to educate children in dealing with media.

It is good to point out that in the Netherlands media literacy according to the definition used here (“the ability to access media and to understand, critically evaluate, create and communicate media content”) is called ‘mediawijsheid’, which translates into media wisdom.

**Media literacy and online safety through formal education**

Although schools are apparently not obliged to have media literacy and online safety education in their curriculum, they are strongly advised to do so. Many schools are already working to improve the digital citizenship of their students. Meaning that students are aware of social media and use it in a responsible way. This also includes responsible citizenship with regard to the use of internet, cell phone and other media.

At a conference [1](June, 2017) about digital citizenship, organized by the municipality of Utrecht, in their programme ‘Together we are Utrecht’ it was pointed out that the e-community has huge
consequences for the interaction between people on-line. Digital citizenship can also be an important way to prevent polarization and radicalization.

Two websites have been initiated by government to promote media literacy and online safety in general, including through formal education: Mediawijzer.net and Mediawijshheid.nl. Both websites and their aims and contents are described in the following text.

**Mediawijzer.net: Dutch media literacy network**

Mediawijzer.net [2] was established in 2008 at the initiative of the government. Mediawijzer.net aims to provide all Dutchmen with a framework they can use to become more media literate in order to increase their full participation in society. Being ‘media literate’ means possessing the knowledge and skills to be able to function consciously, critically and actively in a multi-media world.

Mediawijzer.net is an expertise centre that links the activities of various organizations in the area of media literacy and promotes cooperation between them. The following five organizations are at the centre’s core:

- **Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision** [3] (Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid - NIBG [4]);
- Information Society Platform (Platform voor de InformatieSamenleving - ECP [5]) (only in Dutch);
- **National Library of the Netherlands** [6], (Koninklijke Bibliotheek [7]), Institute for the Public Libraries Sector;
- Expertise centre for ICT in Education (Kennisnet [8]);
- Public Broadcasting Company NPO.

These organizations all cover a specific area within the media literacy playing field. Additionally, Mediawijzer.net works with a growing number of network partners. Since 2008, more than 1,100 organisations have registered as network partners. Among the latter are libraries, schools, media producers, museums, research institutes, publishing companies and more. The free network membership enables these organisations to meet, exchange expertise and develop new initiatives.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is responsible for the national media policy. The national government helps parents and educators to educate children in dealing with media. For example ‘Watch wisely’ (Kijkwijzer [9]) warns parents about the age at which a programme or movie can be harmful to watch. All productions receive an age related advice. Kijkwijzer uses symbols that show the topic of the advice, e.g. violent content, discrimination or use of foul language.

The Netherlands Institute for Classification of Audiovisual Media NICAM [10] (Nederlands Instituut voor de Classificatie van Audiovisuele Media NICAM) develops the standards for the advice concerning age. NICAM also deals with complaints people might have about the wrong use of the Kijkwijzer advice producers might use. About 1,600 companies are members of NICAM, either directly or through branch organizations:

- Public and commercial broadcasting companies
- On demand services
- Film distributors
- Video libraries
- Game distributors
All about age limits

Kijkwijzer

Broadcasting companies have to take the young viewers’ age in consideration with their daytime programming: they can only broadcast programmes with the age advice of 12 year after 8 PM and before 6 AM; programmes with the advice of 16 year should be broadcast after 10 PM and before 6 AM. Shops, cinemas and video libraries are not allowed to offer 16+ productions to young people below that age.

Computer games

The packaging of almost all computer games contains an age advice: the international PEGI [11] (Pan European Game Information). This advice points out until which age a game can be harmful, e.g. because it contains gambling, violence or foul language.

Use media wisely

The network ‘Mediawise [2]’ (Mediawijzer.net [12]) helps in using modern media. Children and young people use media a lot. According to Statistics Netherlands CBS [13] (Centraal Bureau Statistiek CBS [14]) seven in every ten Dutch internet users aged 12 years and older were active on social media in 2012, when the last European survey on media use took place. Facebook and Twitter were very popular social networks. Nearly all young people were regular users of Facebook and Twitter. At the time the proportion of social media users in the Netherlands ranked among the highest in the European Union. A recent news message of CBS [15] (23 June, 2017) stated that the use of media among young people has hardly changed since 2014.

Children under 12 also use media more and more, often without supervision. Mediawijzer.net helps children, young people, parents and educators to use media safely and responsibly. It also explains the possibilities to use media, organises public campaigns or workshops and carries out research on media use. More than 1000 organizations, companies and institutions are connected to the network. These organizations work in media awareness raising, provide educational materials, manuals, give workshops, have projects and do research on safe use of media. They can meet and work together at Mediawijzer.net.

Mediawijsheid.nl: Dutch website for schools

Mediawijsheid.nl [16] (only in Dutch) provides information for school leaders and school boards on how to give media literacy a permanent place in the school:

Brochures

Two examples: (1) The brochure ‘Media literacy at primary school’ (Mediawijsheid op de basisschool [17]) in which 21 teachers tell about their successful digital citizenship lessons; (2) The brochure ‘Media literacy for school boards’ which gives advice on how to make schools media literate.

Games

An example is MediaMasters [18], a game that won the Evens Price for Media Education in 2015, as the most successful European initiative for children between 9 and 16 years in using social media in a responsible and constructive way. MediaMasters stimulates the dialogue between students, parents
and teachers about social media, commercials, information skills, programming, games, cyber bullying, video blogging, imaging, virtual reality and online behaviour.

Educational lessons

A lot of educational lessons material about digital citizenship is available. The Mediawijsheid website provides an overview of all available materials. They post lessons for various educational institutions, from child care to primary, secondary, higher, special and vocational education.

To know what a media literate pupil or student must know or be able to do, a competence model on media literacy has been developed: Mediawijsheid Competentiemodel [19]. In this model media literacy is divided in the following competences:

- Have an insight in the mediatizing of society;
- Understand how media is made;
- See how media colour reality;
- Use apparels, software and applications;
- Be able to orientate oneself in media surroundings;
- Find and process information;
- Create content;
- Participate in social networks;
- Reflect on one’s own media use;
- Achieve goals with media.

For each of these competences there are various levels of skills involved:

Information skills help in searching, finding, assessing and processing information. On the website of Mediawijsheid two examples are given of search engines:

- ‘Your search engine’ ([Jouwzoekmachine.nl](http://Jouwzoekmachine.nl)) takes children’s reading level into account. It gives relevant information for 6 to 15 year olds.
- [Wikikids](http://Wikikids) is a Wikipedia for children containing educational articles that are adjusted to their age.

Library and reading skills

The library is the expert area for searching, finding and critically assessing information. Two examples on the information libraries give about media literacy:

On [Webdetective](http://Webdetective) (only in Dutch) children learn to develop a critical view on information.

The website ‘Innovation library’ ([Innovatiebieb.nl](http://Innovatiebieb.nl)) (only Dutch) is a platform for libraries to share ideas, knowledge and materials about innovation and to learn from each other. Also examples of innovative projects and initiatives on media literacy are given, such as the Action programme ‘Count in with Language’ ([Actieprogramma Tel mee met Taal 2016-2018](http://Actieprogramma Tel mee met Taal 2016-2018)). The target of this programme, supported by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, is to reach 1 million children from 0 to 13 years of age in 2018 with activities that stimulate their reading skills and their pleasure in reading.

According to MediaWijsheid.nl reading skills are essential for media literacy. Libraries play an increasingly important role in stimulating, supporting and facilitating Dutch people in the area of (new) media. They will become the houses of media literacy.
People without basic digital skills can also visit their library. They offer more information in their ‘file on the digital gap’ ([dossier over de digitale kloof][25]). An example of their information concerns the [Digimeter][26]. With the Digimeter municipalities, UWV’s and other organizations can register if somebody has difficulties with digital skills, for instance with transferring the reading of the water meter or posting an ad on the digital market. It is an online instrument especially designed for people with limited language skills, including young people with learning disabilities.

Copyrights

On the website MediaWijsheid.nl information is also provided about copyrights ([Auteursrechten][27]) (only in Dutch) on internet and social media.

**Promoting media literacy and online safety through non-formal and informal learning**

One example of a programme that promotes online safety through non-formal learning is ‘Mediawise by making media’:

**Making migrant youngsters mediawise**

The project [Mediawise by making media][28] (MMM) has been accepted within the route Resilient and Meaningful Societies (Veerkrachtige en Zinvolle Samenlevingen) of the [Dutch National Research Agenda][29]. The project investigates how young migrant people, refugees in particular, can be trained in processing information and using media in order to feel at home more quickly and prepare for a future in the Netherlands.

By working together in classes with fellow students of diverse backgrounds, they are equipped as adolescent individuals with important new competences such as self-awareness, resilience and language and social skills.

The critical media use is based on: co-creation with children/young people; digital citizenship; digital identity formation.

**Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media**

**Tackling online bullying**

In the ‘Week Against Bullying’ ([Week Tegen Pester][30]), 18 to 22 September 2017, the theme is: “Online bullying. Deal with it!” In this week teachers are supported with tips and tools to prevent and tackle online bullying. They cooperate with parents, the school team and the students. Mediawijzer.net and its partners organise many activities to take place in that week. Some examples:

- In the lesson 'Whatshappy' problems with chatting are discussed. It challenges students to make agreements on how they can decently communicate with each other.
- The youth theater show ‘Like’ by theater group PlayBack is all about friendship, group pressure, being excluded, bullying and the influence of social media. Students are confronted with the emotional results of bullying.