REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE MEDIA RESEARCH CENTRE, IFP UKEN IN KRAKÓW, 2014–2026

MEDIA RESEARCH CENTRE, IFP UKEN | REPORT 2014–2026
Media Research Centre
Institute of Polish Philology
University of the National Education Commission in Kraków
Development of research, international cooperation, teaching, expert and public-engagement activities
Kraków 2026
Report prepared: September 2026
Prepared by: Professor Agnieszka Ogonowska, PhD, Director of the Media Research Centre, IPF

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the development and activities of the Media Research Centre (MRC), operating within the University of the National Education Commission in Kraków, between 2014 and 2026. It portrays the Centre's activity as a coherent process of building an interdisciplinary research environment that brings together media studies with psychology, pedagogy, cultural studies, social communication and media studies, information science, social communication, and reflection on digital technologies and artificial intelligence.

During the period under review, there was a clear shift in emphasis: from research on media education, audiovisual culture and communication towards issues concerning human functioning in the digital environment. Media and digital competences, cyberpsychology, disinformation, digital well-being, digital resilience, the media practices of young adults and Generation Alpha, platform culture, algorithmic culture and competences related to generative AI gained particular importance.

An important outcome of this intellectual development has been the original concepts of Media Education 4.0 and Positive Media Education 4.0. In these approaches, media education is understood not merely as protection against risks, but as a process of developing critical thinking, agency, self-regulation, creativity, responsibility, resilience and well-being. The work combines, among other perspectives, the functional-relational approach, the DigComp competence framework and Martin Seligman's PERMA model.
Between 2024 and 2026, international cooperation became substantially more important. Particularly significant are the Centre's scientific relations with Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra and the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, as well as developing contacts with partners in the Czech Republic, Spain and the United States. This cooperation makes it possible to combine comparative research, the development of diagnostic tools, academic exchange, the organisation of scientific events and the design of new educational models.

The report indicates that the further development of the MRC in 2026–2030 should focus on the internationalisation of research, AI literacy, digital resilience and well-being, research on disinformation, the development of Media Education 4.0, comparative projects and the creation of sustainable research and teaching networks.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1
1. ORIGINS, STATUS AND MISSION OF THE CENTRE 3
2. STRUCTURE AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY OF THE CENTRE 3
3. CHRONOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT, 2014–2026 4
4. MAIN AREAS OF RESEARCH ACTIVITY 4
4.1. Media Education and Media Education 4.0 4
4.2. Media and Digital Competences 4
4.3. Media Psychology and Cyberpsychology 5
4.4. Disinformation, Fake News and Informational Resilience 5
4.5. Digital Well-being 5
4.6. Digital Resilience 5
4.7. Generation Alpha 5
4.8. Young Adults 5
4.9. Algorithmic Culture and AI 5
5. ORIGINAL CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS 5
5.1. Functional-Relational Perspective 6
5.2. Media Education 4.0 6
5.3. Positive Media Education 4.0 6
5.4. SRF, DARF and DEM 6
5.5. Research Methodology 6
6. COMPARATIVE RESEARCH: DIGITAL COMPETENCES AND YOUNG ADULTS' WELL-BEING 6
7. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND PROJECTS 7
7.1. MAJOR INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES 7
7.2. SCIENTIFIC EVENTS, 2025–2026 8
7.3. COOPERATION WITH SPAIN AND THE UNITED STATES 8
8. CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND THE METHODOLOGICAL FORUM FOR YOUNG MEDIA RESEARCHERS 9
9. TEACHING, TRAINING AND EXPERT ACTIVITIES 9
10. PUBLICATIONS, EDITORIAL WORK AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS 10
11. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL OUTREACH 10
12. ASSESSMENT OF THE CENTRE'S DEVELOPMENT, 2014–2026 10
13. DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES, 2026–2030 11
14. CONCLUSION 11
15. SOURCES AND DOCUMENTATION 12

1. ORIGINS, STATUS AND MISSION OF THE CENTRE

The Media Research Centre was established on the initiative of Professor Agnieszka Ogonowska, who has directed the Centre since its foundation. It was developed as a space integrating media research conducted within the Institute of Polish Philology at UKEN. Its identity is based on the assumption that media are simultaneously technologies, systems of communication, elements of culture and social institutions, as well as environments influencing cognition, emotions, relationships, learning and well-being.

The mission of the Centre is to conduct interdisciplinary research on media and communication, develop modern models of media and digital education, support early-career researchers, disseminate research findings, and build cooperation between academia, education, public institutions, the cultural sector and international partners.

The development of the MRC should be understood as a process of moving from individual research topics towards a more integrated programme. The Centre combines basic and applied research, theoretical reflection with empirical research, and scientific activity with teaching, expert work and public dissemination.

2. STRUCTURE AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY OF THE CENTRE

The current structure of the MRC comprises research teams representing a broad spectrum of contemporary media research. Its organisation demonstrates that the Centre is not limited to a single subdisciplinary model of media studies, but instead provides a platform for cooperation among different specialisations.

- Research Team on AI and Algorithmic Culture - AI literacy, algorithms, generative AI, personalisation, automation and the social consequences of algorithmic systems.
- Book Studies Research Team - Books, reading practices, written culture and transformations in the circulation of content.
- Film, Communication and Film Culture Research Team - Film, audiovisual culture, communication and relationships between media and culture.
- Press Studies Research Team - The press, journalistic genres, transformations of the media market and public communication.
- Information Science Research Team - Information, its organisation, access, circulation, credibility and information competences.
- Research Team on National and Ethnic Minorities - Representations, communication and the presence of minorities in media and culture.
- Media Psychology and Media Education Research Team - Media psychology, cyberpsychology, media education, well-being, competences and user behaviour.
- Research Team on the Mediatization of Culture and Art - Mediatization, culture and art, and transformations of cultural practices under the influence of media.

- Research Team on Anti-Discrimination Policy in the Media - Discrimination, representation, equality and media responsibility.
- Research Team on New Media and Journalism - New media, digital journalism, social media, platforms and transformations of communication.

Two research areas are also particularly visible in the Centre's programme structure: "Media Education 4.0" and "AI Competences". Projects concerning, among other issues, Positive Media Education 4.0, Generation Alpha, young adults facing disinformation, and models and strategies for researching AI competences are developed around these areas.

3. CHRONOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT, 2014–2026

2014–2016: Consolidation of interests around media education, audiovisual culture, social communication and psychological aspects of media reception.
2017–2019: Expansion of research to include cyberpsychology, media addiction, communication competences and human functioning in the digital environment.
2020–2021: Intensification of reflection on the digitalisation of social life, remote education, digital well-being and changing media practices.
2022–2024: Development of research on disinformation, media and digital competences, platform culture and new models of media education.
2025–2026: A strong emergence of issues related to generative AI, AI literacy, digital resilience and comparative research conducted from an international perspective.

This chronology does not imply the abrupt replacement of one set of topics by another. New directions emerged from earlier research competences. Research on media psychology provided a foundation for cyberpsychology; media education became the starting point for Media Education 4.0; research on disinformation led to an interest in digital resilience; while reflection on the digital environment and algorithms naturally opened the way to AI literacy.

4. MAIN AREAS OF RESEARCH ACTIVITY

4.1. Media Education and Media Education 4.0

The Centre develops media education as an area combining technical, informational, critical, communicative, creative and ethical competences. Media Education 4.0 responds to a platform-based and algorithmic environment in which the user is not merely a recipient but an active participant and co-creator of digital culture. Critical thinking, reflexivity, agency and responsibility remain central.

4.2. Media and Digital Competences

Research focuses on how users understand media, search for and evaluate information, communicate, create content, solve problems and manage their own online functioning. In comparative research, DigComp frameworks are used, while competences are analysed as resources related to needs, practices and the consequences of media use.

4.3. Media Psychology and Cyberpsychology

An important strand concerns psychological mechanisms of media use: attention, emotions, self-regulation, social relationships, social pressure, FOMO, information overload, digital habits and the impact of the media environment on well-being.

4.4. Disinformation, Fake News and Informational Resilience

Research covers the recognition and verification of information, susceptibility to disinformation, fact-checking strategies, information sources and critical competences. Over time, the focus shifted from detecting falsehood itself towards building resilience: the ability to assess information critically, cope with uncertainty and maintain agency in the information environment.

4.5. Digital Well-being

Digital well-being is understood not as simply reducing screen time, but as the quality of digital experiences and the balance between users' goals, their ways of using technology, relationships, emotions and self-regulation.

4.6. Digital Resilience

Digital resilience encompasses the human dimension of coping with overload, manipulation, communicative threats and technological change. In this perspective, digital competences are not merely a set of skills but an adaptive resource.

4.7. Generation Alpha

The Centre analyses the media practices of children and adolescents, home digital culture, parental mediation, the platform environment and relationships between the intensity of technology use, development, communication and well-being.

4.8. Young Adults

A particular area of interest concerns students and young adults: their digital competences, information strategies, self-regulation, experiences of disinformation and the relationships between competences and well-being.

4.9. Algorithmic Culture and AI

The newest direction includes understanding how algorithms, recommender systems and generative AI operate, critically evaluating outputs, recognising errors and biases, addressing ethical issues and promoting responsible AI use, particularly in higher education.

5. ORIGINAL CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

The development of the MRC is connected not only with addressing current topics, but also with attempts to create its own interpretative models. Their common denominator is a move away from reducing media to technology and an emphasis on relationships between

the individual, the media environment, communication practices, needs and the consequences of media use.

5.1. Functional-Relational Perspective

The functional-relational approach treats media use as a process connected with users' needs and the functions that media perform in their lives. At the same time, it analyses relationships among competences, practices, the technological environment and the effects of media use. This makes it possible to avoid simplistic interpretations such as "more technology = greater risk" or "more competences = automatically greater well-being".

5.2. Media Education 4.0

Media Education 4.0 is an attempt to update media education for the conditions of a platform-based and algorithmic society. Its objective is to prepare users for conscious, critical, creative and responsible participation in digital culture.

5.3. Positive Media Education 4.0

Positive Media Education 4.0 develops the earlier concept by incorporating the perspective of human well-being and resources. It draws inspiration from Martin Seligman's PERMA model: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. The model shifts the research question from "how can we protect people from media?" to "how can we develop competences that enable people to use media for quality of life, relationships, agency and development?".

5.4. SRF, DARF and DEM

The Centre's programme work also develops original conceptual frameworks: the Systemic-Relational-Functional Model (SRF), the Digital Adaptive Resilience Framework (DARF) and the Disinformation Evolution Model (DEM). They are united by an interest in the dynamic relationship between the individual, the digital environment, mechanisms of adaptation and transformations of the information ecosystem.

5.5. Research Methodology

Depending on the research problem, the Centre uses surveys, correlational and comparative analyses, qualitative methods, Grounded Theory and CAQDAS tools. Qualitative research employs, among other tools, MAXQDA, Interactive Quote Matrix, Code Relations Browser and MAXMaps. The methodological approach assumes the combination of quantitative and qualitative data and cautious interpretation of self-report and correlational findings.

6. COMPARATIVE RESEARCH: DIGITAL COMPETENCES AND YOUNG ADULTS' WELL-BEING

One of the most recent research initiatives is the international study "Digital Competencies and Well-being among Young Adults: A Comparison of Poland, Spain and Slovakia". Its comparative report covers 267 young adults: 140 participants from Poland, 54 from Spain

and 73 from Slovakia. The study was conducted in May–June 2026 using an original online questionnaire containing 44 statements rated on a 1–5 Likert scale; the instrument was inspired by DigComp and PERMA and also included self-regulation and digital resilience. The findings indicate that the three groups are more similar than fundamentally different, although differences occur in particular practices and experiences. Online communication and problem-solving received the highest ratings, whereas content creation and self-regulation-especially control over time spent online-remained weaker. Within the PERMA dimensions, meaning received the highest rating (M = 3.87), while positive emotions received the lowest (M = 3.63). The strongest overall association between digital competences and PERMA was recorded in Spain ($\rho = 0.65$), followed by Poland ($\rho = 0.54$) and Slovakia ($\rho = 0.48$). The findings should be interpreted as self-assessments and correlational relationships rather than evidence of causality.
Poland: N = 140; 52.4% of the sample; women 77.9%; first-cycle students 73.6%.
Spain: N = 54; 20.2% of the sample; women 64.8%; first-cycle students 98.1%.
Slovakia: N = 73; 27.3% of the sample; women 79.5%; first-cycle students 83.6%.
Total: N = 267; women 75.7%.
The significance of the project extends beyond describing differences between countries. The study provides an empirical foundation for the development of Positive Media Education 4.0 and for designing subsequent research on relationships among competences, self-regulation, resilience and well-being.

7. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND PROJECTS

Internationalisation is one of the most important directions of the MRC's development. Cooperation with foreign partners makes it possible to conduct research in different cultural and institutional contexts, compare educational models, develop joint projects and build sustainable scientific networks.

Relations with Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra and the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava are particularly important. Shared research interests in this area concern creativity, media, disinformation and resilience to media manipulation. Cooperation also includes partners from the Czech Republic, Spain and the United States.

7.1. MAJOR INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

- CreateReSource R3 09I03-03-V04-00666 | Potentials of creativity as a source of prophylaxis against fake news in social media | 9/2024–8/2026 | Research on creativity as a preventive resource against fake news in social media; scientific leader: Professor Katarína Fichnová.
- APVV-23-0612 | Creativity as a source of prophylaxis against media hoaxes / CREativity Against HOaXes | 7/2024–7/2028 | A project devoted to creativity as a source of prevention against media hoaxes; Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, in cooperation with partners including UCM Trnava.

- APVV 18-0257 | Multimedia digital production incubator – reciprocal transfer of science, art and creative industries | 7/2019–2021 | Development of multimedia digital production and knowledge transfer among science, art and the creative industries.
- VEGA 1/0650/22 | Mass-media communiqués in digital and printed form and their comprehension by various target groups | - | Research on mass-media messages in digital and printed forms and their comprehension by different audiences.
- KEGA 018UCM-4/2021 | Art in Mass Media – Ambient Media | - | Issues concerning art in mass media and ambient media.
- KEGA 017UKF-4/2015 | Teaching and research project | - | Development of research and teaching cooperation in the field of media.
- Visegrad Fund 60900018 | Creativity for masmedial studies – marketing communication in the V4 countries conditions | - | V4 cooperation concerning creativity and marketing communication in Central European contexts.
- VEGA 1/0769/08 | European identity, socialization and media culture | - | European identity, socialisation and media culture.
- VEGA 1/0195/11 | Stereotyped genderization of the mass-medial space | - | Issues concerning stereotyping and gendering in the mass-media space.

7.2. SCIENTIFIC EVENTS, 2025–2026

- "Media Disinfodemic vs. Resilience – Challenges for Science and Society", Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, 7 November 2025. The event focused on the relationship between the contemporary disinformation environment and the resilience of individuals and societies, as well as on the role of science in diagnosing and counteracting the consequences of the infodemic.
- "Resilience to Online Manipulation: Creativity, Developmental Aspects, and Digital Inclusion Across Generations", 29 April 2026. The meeting was devoted to resilience to online manipulation, the role of creativity, developmental perspectives and digital inclusion across generations. The event strengthened a shared research area connecting media, psychology, education and digital competences.

7.3. COOPERATION WITH SPAIN AND THE UNITED STATES

International cooperation also includes comparative projects with Spanish partners and contacts developed through academic mobility. A special place is occupied by cooperation with universities in Madrid, Seville, Málaga and Barcelona, connected with the development of comparative research on digital competences and the well-being of young adults. Another important experience is "Critical and Functional Media Literacy in Poland and the United States", aimed at comparing functional and critical approaches to media competences.

8. CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND THE METHODOLOGICAL FORUM FOR YOUNG MEDIA RESEARCHERS

The MRC initiated and co-created conferences, seminars, expert debates and scientific meetings. Their function was not only to disseminate findings but also to create a space where media studies could meet psychology, pedagogy, cultural studies, information science and research on technology.

The Methodological Forum for Young Media Researchers is an important element of the Centre's community-oriented activity. The Forum serves to present projects, discuss the construction of research problems and qualitative and quantitative methods, and develop academic competences. It also has the dimension of intergenerational knowledge transfer and contributes to building a community of young media scholars.

- supporting doctoral students and early-career researchers in designing research;
- consulting methodological problems and research tools;
- promoting the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods;
- building cooperation networks among researchers representing different disciplines;
- disseminating good research and publication practices.

9. TEACHING, TRAINING AND EXPERT ACTIVITIES

Teaching activity remains directly connected with the Centre's research profile. Research findings are translated into academic courses, teaching materials, workshops and training. Particular attention is devoted to media education, media psychology, cyberpsychology, fact-checking, digital competences and AI:

- Media Literacy
- Storytelling and Media Culture
- Foundations of Social Communication
- Psychology of Media and Communication
- Internet and Digital Practices
- Fact-checking and Digital Competences
- Artificial Intelligence, Media Education 4.0 and Future Competences
- Cinema and Psychology
- Cyberpsychology and User Research
- Addiction to New Technologies
- User Experience

Training and expert activities also include materials addressed to teachers, educators, parents and students. Their purpose is to translate scientific language into practical solutions supporting critical thinking, safe and responsible media use, information competences and digital well-being.

10. PUBLICATIONS, EDITORIAL WORK AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

The Centre's scholarly output includes monographs, academic articles, reports, book chapters, conference presentations and teaching materials. Publications focus on media literacy, cyberpsychology, disinformation, digital competences, well-being, human relationships with technology and media education.

An important element of the Centre's activity is also academic editorial work and attention to the quality of scholarly communication. The Centre creates conditions for disseminating findings in Polish and English, which is particularly important for the internationalisation of research.

11. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL OUTREACH

The Centre regards public dissemination as an integral part of the social responsibility of science. Of particular importance is providing educational practitioners with tools enabling them to respond to disinformation, counter manipulation, support digital well-being and develop AI competences.

An important role is played by online resources and educational materials, including thematic areas devoted to Media Education 4.0, AI competences, Generation Alpha and young adults facing disinformation. The Centre also develops a resource base for teachers, parents and students.

12. ASSESSMENT OF THE CENTRE'S DEVELOPMENT, 2014–2026

The period under review can be assessed as a time of consistent professionalisation, specialisation and internationalisation. The most important qualitative change has been the transition from dispersed media-studies topics to a programme in which individual areas reinforce one another.

Research profile - Clearly expanded: from media education and audiovisual culture to digital competences, well-being, resilience, disinformation, AI and algorithmic culture.
Interdisciplinarity - Strong; combining media studies with psychology, pedagogy, cultural studies, information science and research on technology.

Internationalisation - Growing; particularly important cooperation networks with Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Spain and the United States.

Conceptual innovation - Development of original approaches to Media Education 4.0, Positive Media Education 4.0 and models of resilience and disinformation.
Connection between research and teaching - Strong; research findings are incorporated into courses, workshops and educational materials.

Social significance - High in the areas of disinformation, digital well-being, education and responsible use of AI.

A major strength of the MRC is its ability to respond rapidly to transformations in the media environment without abandoning earlier achievements. Challenges include the further consolidation of teams, increasing the scale of international projects, developing research infrastructure and systematically documenting results and their impact.

13. DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES, 2026–2030

The 2026–2030 perspective should serve to consolidate the Centre's position as an interdisciplinary centre for research on media, people and digital technologies. Of key importance is the continued integration of basic research, comparative projects, teaching and knowledge transfer.

AI literacy and AI competences - Developing diagnostic and educational models for students, teachers and academic staff; critical evaluation of AI outputs, ethics, bias, safety and academic integrity.

Digital resilience and well-being - Research on self-regulation, resilience to manipulation, information overload and the quality of digital experiences.

Disinformation and information culture - Developing research on the evolution of disinformation, creativity as a preventive resource and verification competences.

Generation Alpha and young adults - Further comparative research on digital practices, home digital culture, education and well-being.

Internationalisation - Expanding the PL–SK–CZ network, cooperation with Spain and the United States, and preparing consortium projects.

Methodology and data - Developing mixed methods, CAQDAS, diagnostic tools, data repositories and standards for documenting research.

Teaching and transfer to the social environment - Creating micro-curricula, practitioner-oriented materials and training responding to the challenges of algorithmic society.

A particular opportunity lies in building research programmes that simultaneously generate publications, data, diagnostic tools and educational solutions. Such a model strengthens the social impact of research and increases the Centre's competitiveness in national and international projects.

14. CONCLUSION

Between 2014 and 2026, the Media Research Centre of the Institute of Polish Philology at the University of the National Education Commission in Kraków developed into an interdisciplinary space integrating research on media, digital technologies and people. Its activity encompasses scientific research, national and international projects, teaching, the organisation of events, expert activity and public engagement.

The most important developmental achievement has been the creation of a coherent research programme in which media education, digital competences, media psychology, disinformation, well-being, digital resilience, algorithmic culture and AI are treated as mutually connected elements of the contemporary media environment.

The original concepts of Media Education 4.0 and Positive Media Education 4.0 constitute an important programme contribution because they combine critical media analysis with the development of human resources, well-being, agency and responsible participation in digital culture. Developing international cooperation, especially with Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Spain and the United States, provides a foundation for the next stage of development.

Looking ahead to 2026–2030, the Centre has the potential to further strengthen its position as a recognised centre for research on media and digital competences, resilience and well-being, disinformation and AI literacy. Realising this potential will require further consolidation of teams, the development of large comparative projects, internationalisation and the consistent integration of research with teaching and knowledge transfer.

15. SOURCES AND DOCUMENTATION

- Official website of the Media Research Centre, IFP UKEN – the "Structure" section and research areas: Media Education 4.0 and AI Competences.
- MRC research documents and reports concerning digital competences, digital well-being and the comparison of Poland, Spain and Slovakia.
- Project materials concerning Positive Media Education 4.0, digital well-being and Social Emotional Learning.
- Materials concerning the theoretical orientation of research on AI competences of Generation Alpha.
- Documentation of international projects and cooperation with Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra and the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava.
- Conference materials and documentation of scientific events organised by the MRC and international partners.
- Website of the journal Studia de Cultura: https://studiadecultura.uken.krakow.pl/