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## **REPORT**

on media literacy in a digital world  
(2008/2129(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on media literacy in a digital world (2008/2129(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural 2005 Expressions,
- having regard to Directive 2007/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2007 amending Council Directive 89/552/EEC on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the pursuit of television broadcasting activities<sup>1</sup>, and in particular to recital 37 and Article 26 of Directive 89/552/EEC (Audiovisual Media Services Directive),
- having regard to Decision No 854/2005/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2005 establishing a multiannual Community Programme on promoting safer use of the Internet and new online technologies<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to Decision No 1718/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 concerning the implementation of a programme of support for the European audiovisual sector (MEDIA 2007)<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on the protection of minors and human dignity and on the right of reply in relation to the competitiveness of the European audiovisual and on-line information services industry (2006/952/EC)<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC)<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 December 2007 entitled ‘A European approach to media literacy in the digital environment’ (COM(2007)0833),
- having regard to the Commission staff working document entitled ‘Media pluralism in the Member States of the European Union’ (SEC(2007)0032),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 1 June 2005 entitled ‘i2010 – A European Information Society for growth and employment’(COM(2005)0229),
- having regard to its resolution of 20 November 2002 on media concentration<sup>6</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 332, 18.12.2007, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 149, 11.6.2005, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> OJ L 327, 24.11.2006, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> OJ L 378, 27.12.2006, p. 72.

<sup>5</sup> OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> OJ C 25 E, 29.1.2004, p. 205.

- having regard to its resolution of 6 September 2005 on ‘Television without Frontiers’<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 27 April 2006 on the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting: an opportunity for European audiovisual policy and cultural diversity?<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to the Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on intercultural competences and in particular a European approach to media literacy in the digital environment<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to the 1982 UNESCO Grünwald Declaration on Media Education,
  - having regard to the 2007 UNESCO Paris Agenda — twelve recommendations for media education,
  - having regard to Council of Europe Recommendation Rec(2006)0012 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on empowering children in the new information and communications environment,
  - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A6-0461/2008),
- A. whereas the media make themselves felt in politics and the day-to-day life of society; whereas a high degree of media concentration can endanger media pluralism; and whereas media literacy is therefore central to political culture and active participation by Union citizens,
- B. whereas all types of media, audiovisual and printed, traditional and digital, are blending together and the different forms of media are converging, both technically and in terms of content; whereas new mass media are penetrating into all areas of life thanks to innovative technologies, whereas these new media call for users to take a more active role; and whereas social communities, weblogs and video games are also forms of media,
- C. whereas, as far as young media users are concerned, the Internet is the first and principal source of information; whereas their Internet skills are geared to their specific needs, without being systematically ordered; whereas adults, by contrast, keep themselves informed primarily with the aid of radio, television, newspapers and magazines; and whereas, in the current media environment, media literacy therefore helps to meet the challenges posed by new media – particularly the scope they offer for interaction and creative participation – as well as providing the knowledge needed for traditional media, which are still a main source of public information,
- D. whereas new communications technologies can swamp the uninformed user in a landslide of information that is undifferentiated in terms of its relevance, with excessive information potentially posing as big a problem as a lack of information,
- E. whereas proper training in IT and media use respectful of the rights and freedoms of

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 193 E, 17.8.2006, p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 296 E, 6.12.2006, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 141, 7.6.2008, p. 14.

others significantly enhances employability from an individual point of view and, from the point of view of the economy as a whole, helps to achieve the Lisbon goals,

- F. whereas broad access to communications technologies affords everyone the possibility of transmitting information globally, meaning that every member of the public is a potential journalist, and making media literacy a necessity not only for understanding information but also for generating and distributing media content; and whereas computer skills alone consequently do not lead automatically to greater media literacy,
- G. whereas, when it comes to the development of telecommunications networks and progress towards disseminating information and communications technology (ICT), there are significant differences between the Member States, as well as between regions, particularly in remote and rural areas, posing the threat that the digital divide in the EU could widen still further,
- H. whereas schools have an essential role to play in moulding people capable of communicating and of exercising judgement; whereas the position regarding media education varies widely from one Member State and one region to the next, as does the degree to which ICT are integrated and used within education; and whereas media education can be provided primarily by teachers who themselves are media literate and have been given the necessary training,
- I. whereas media education is essential to achieving a high level of media literacy, which is an important part of political education that helps people to strengthen their behaviour as active citizens and their awareness of both rights and duties; whereas, furthermore, well-informed, politically mature citizens form the basis of a pluralist society and whereas, by producing their own content and media products, users acquire abilities affording them a deeper insight into the principles and values of professionally produced media content,
- J. whereas media education work aimed at older people is not so well established as the activities aimed at young people and whereas older people often feel apprehensive about, and inhibited by, new media,
- K. whereas threats to the security of personal data are becoming increasingly insidious and manifold, thereby constituting a high risk for uninformed users;
- L. whereas media literacy is an essential key qualification in the information and communication society,
- M. whereas the media provide opportunities for global communication and openness to the world, whereas they are cornerstones of democratic societies and whereas they impart knowledge as well as providing information, and whereas new digital media provide positive opportunities for participation and creativity, thereby enhancing citizens' involvement in political processes,
- N. whereas there are currently insufficient data available to make precise statements about the level of media literacy in the European Union,
- O. whereas the decisive importance of media literacy has also been highlighted by UNESCO

in, for example, the Grünwald Declaration on Media Education (1982) and the Paris Agenda – twelve recommendations for media education (2007),

### ***Principles***

1. Welcomes the Commission communication, but believes that there is room for improvement to the extent that the European approach intended to foster media literacy needs to be more clear cut, especially as regards the inclusion of traditional media and recognition of the importance of media education;
2. Welcomes the conclusions on the above subjects issued by the ‘Education, Youth and Culture’ Council following its meeting of 21 and 22 May 2008; looks to the Member States to do their utmost to promote media literacy and proposes that the Member States’ contact committee, as provided for in the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, be strengthened through the recruitment of education experts;
3. Urges the Commission to adopt a recommendation, and develop an action plan, on media literacy; urges the Commission to organise a meeting of the contact committee on Audio-Visual Media Services in 2009 with a view to facilitating information exchanges and effective cooperation on a regular basis;
4. Requests the authorities responsible for regulating audiovisual and electronic communications to cooperate at the various levels for the improvement of media literacy; recognises the special need to develop at national level both codes of conduct and common regulatory initiatives; highlights the need for all stakeholders to be involved in promoting the systematic study and regular analysis of the various facets and dimensions of media literacy;
5. Recommends that the Commission also use the Media Literacy Expert Group to discuss media education matters and that the Group meet more regularly and consult, on a regular basis, the representatives of all Member States;
6. Notes that, in addition to policy-makers, journalists, radio and television broadcasters and media companies, it is mainly small local entities such as libraries, adult education centres, citizens’ cultural and media centres, further education and training establishments and citizens’ media (e.g. community media) that can make an active contribution to promoting media literacy;
7. Calls on the Commission, having regard to Article 26 of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, to devise media literacy indicators with a view to fostering media literacy in the EU in the long term;
8. Notes that media literacy denotes the ability to use individual media unaided, to understand, and bring critical assessment to bear on, the various aspects of media as such and media content, and to communicate – irrespective of the context – and create and disseminate media content; notes in addition that, given the many sources available, what is most important is the ability to separate out information from the new media’s flood of data and images and to categorise that information;

9. Stresses that media literacy is a basic element in consumer information policy, awareness of and familiarity with matters relating to intellectual rights, the mobilisation and democratic participation of citizens and the promotion of intercultural dialogue;
10. Urges the Commission to expand its policy to promote media literacy, working together with all EU bodies and with local and regional authorities, and to intensify cooperation with UNESCO and the Council of Europe;

### ***Aims and target groups***

11. Maintains that media education activities have to encompass all citizens – children, young people, adults, older people, and people with disabilities;
12. Points out that acquiring media literacy begins in the home with learning how to select from the media services available – stressing in this regard the importance of media education for parents, who play a decisive role in the development of children's media-use habits – and continues at school and during lifelong learning, and is strengthened by the efforts of national, governmental and regulatory authorities and the work of media professionals and institutions;
13. Notes that the purpose of media literacy is to enable people to use media and their content in skilled and creative ways, critically analyse media products, understand how the media industry works, and produce media content by their own efforts;
14. Recommends that media education should shed light on copyright aspects of media use and on the importance of respecting intellectual property rights, in particular regarding the Internet, as well as on data and privacy security and the right of informational self-determination; stresses the need for new media-literate users to be aware of the potential risks concerning IT security and the security of personal data, and of the risks relating to cyberviolence;
15. Points out that advertising is an important part of the services provided by the media today; stresses that media literacy helps to provide criteria for assessing the tools and practices used in advertising;

### ***Giving access to information and communications technologies***

16. Calls on European policy-makers to narrow the digital divide between Member States and between town and country by developing the information and communications infrastructure and, above all, setting up broadband in areas not fully equipped;
17. Notes that providing access to broadband Internet is also important for services of general interest and should be characterised by variety, a high level of quality, and affordability, and maintains that every citizen should have the possibility of using an inexpensive broadband connection;

### ***Media education in schools and as a component of teacher training***

18. Maintains that media education should be an element of formal education to which all

children should have access and which should form part and parcel of the curriculum at every stage of schooling;

19. Calls for media literacy to be made the ninth key competence in the European reference framework for lifelong learning set out in Recommendation 2006/962/EC;
20. Recommends that media education should, as far as possible, be geared to practical work and linked to economic, political, literary, social, artistic, and IT-related subjects, and suggests that the way forward lies in the creation of a specific subject – ‘Media Education’ – and in an interdisciplinary approach combined with out-of-school projects;
21. Recommends that educational establishments encourage the development of media products (printed page, audio/video new media) in a manner involving both pupils and teachers, as a way of providing practical training in media literacy;
22. Calls on the Commission, when, as announced, it lays down the media literacy indicators, to take into account both the quality of school tuition and teacher training in this field;
23. Notes that, in addition to educational and education-policy considerations, technical equipment and access to new technologies are also of vital importance, and maintains that school facilities need to be substantially improved so as to enable all schoolchildren to have access to computers, the Internet, and the necessary instruction;
24. Maintains that media education is a matter of particular importance in special schools, given that, when people have disabilities, the media can often do a great deal to overcome obstacles to communication;
25. Recommends that compulsory media education modules be incorporated into teacher training for all school levels, so as to enable the subject to be taught intensively; calls on the relevant national authorities to familiarise teachers of all subjects and at every type of school with the use of audiovisual teaching aids and with the problems associated with media education;
26. Emphasises the need for regular exchange of information, good practices and, in the field of education, pedagogical methods between Member States;
27. Calls on the Commission to devote a specific section of the successor to the MEDIA programme to promoting media literacy, as the current programme contributes little to the promotion of media literacy; supports the Commission’s proposal to develop a new programme called ‘Media Mundus’ to support international cooperation in the audiovisual sector; calls for media literacy to feature more prominently in other EU support programmes, especially Lifelong Learning, eTwinning, Safer Internet and the European Social Fund;

### ***Media education for older people***

28. Maintains that media work with older people has to be done at the places where they are to be found, such as societies, old people’s and nursing homes, assisted living facilities, recreational and enthusiasts’ clubs, action committees, or senior citizens’ groups;



29. Notes that digital networks enable older people in particular to share in everyday life by communicating and to remain independent for as long as possible;

30. Points out that the different kinds of environment in which older people live and their varied spheres of experience, as well as the way they use the media themselves, must be taken into account in media education aimed at them;

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31. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

### 1) INTRODUCTION

The media offer opportunities to engage in worldwide communication, adopt cosmopolitan attitudes, impart knowledge, and advance the development of democracy. However, they also entail a danger of greater manipulation. To that extent they can constitute a challenge as well as a chance.

In the era of globalisation, and at a time when the information and communications sector (ICT) is developing at breakneck speed, innovative technologies and mass media are both impinging more and more strongly on every walk of life. More than ever, society has to keep pace with this rapid technological change and learn to cope with a flood of information. Furthermore, media play the role of gatekeepers when people decide which issues to treat as relevant: to that extent, they serve to set the agenda for politics and everyday life. This selection, however, is made from an individual perspective and therefore not wholly objective. The purpose of media literacy is to help people respond to these challenges and turn them into self-confident media users.

Media literacy denotes the ability to use the media, to understand, and bring critical assessment to bear on, the various aspects of media as such and media content, and to communicate, regardless of the context. In addition to educational considerations, equipment and access to new technologies are of crucial importance. That being the case, media literacy in the broader sense can be understood to mean access to new information technologies and a discerning attitude to the content that they transmit.

This report rounds off the Commission communication, itself directly linked to the new Audiovisual Media Services Directive<sup>1</sup>, which calls on the Commission to report on the standard of media literacy in Member States. The Internet is used first and foremost to search for and find information and news and to send and receive emails. In addition, it is increasingly becoming the source of information employed first of all for inquiries on given subjects. Information of this kind, however, is on the whole less familiar than traditional media output. Most users realise that information obtained from the Internet should, for safety's sake, be checked against information from other sources.

The knowledge needed in order to use the Internet is passed on chiefly within circles of friends and to a lesser extent by parents, but hardly ever by schools. The resulting skills are thus geared to particular individual needs, but not ordered according to any recognisable system. Adults, on the other hand, keep themselves informed mainly with the aid of television, followed by radio. One central challenge therefore, is to map out the path to greater media literacy so that the most diverse forms of media can be taken properly into account. The aims of this report accordingly relate to a range of modern communication tools and

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2007/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2007 amending Council Directive 89/552/EEC on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the pursuit of television broadcasting activities.

types, for example television, film, video, radio, images, newspapers, magazines, music, computer games, the Internet, and advertising. However, traditional and digital media are entirely capable of blending together, and the different forms of media are converging, both technically and in terms of content. This point should also be borne in mind in the study to be conducted for the Commission, and due to be completed early in 2009, on the right criteria to apply when assessing media literacy. That said, problems can arise when measuring media literacy, since it is difficult to encapsulate creative flair, critical discernment, and content within quantitatively measurable criteria. Technical expertise, by contrast, is easier to gauge.

## **2) TARGET GROUPS**

Young people are already active media consumers, but this report covers media consumers as a whole, that is to say, children, young people, adults, older people, and people with disabilities.

## **3) AIMS**

The aim is to enable people to subject media products to critical analysis, understand the economic functions of the media industry, and produce their own media content.

There are thus three goals to attain:

- *giving access to information and communications technologies,*
- *analysis, and a discerning attitude to, media content and the media culture, and independent thought,*
- *production of media texts by users themselves and security in the use of new technologies.*

Education and lifelong learning are essential in order to achieve these goals. Media education is a teaching and learning process in which the media are at once the source and the subject. Its object is skilled handling of the media.

### **a) *Giving access to information and communications technologies***

Computers and the Internet are not spread evenly throughout the EU. In the EU as a whole, 54% of households own a PC, and 43% have an Internet connection (15% have a broadband connection). Regional variations are considerable: depending on the Member State, the percentage of households with a computer ranges between 85% and 21%.

European policy must seek to narrow the digital divide not just between Member States, but also between town and country. All population groups must profit from the advantages of the information society. Rural dwellers must not be allowed to split off from society in urban regions equipped with broadband: this point is particularly important because rural areas are most likely to be affected by the obstacles which distance can pose to job mobility as well as in everyday life.

It is in Europe's general interest that every citizen should have a broadband connection. Local and regional authorities have a key role to play in this area, as do public bodies and private

industry, which must ensure that all population groups have access to ICT.

**b) *Analysis of, and a discerning attitude to, media content and the media culture***

The information imparted and the media available for use should be subjected to ongoing scrutiny as regards their content. This requires the ability to find one's bearings and make conscious choices, read between the lines, pictures, and sounds, understand the effects of images and messages, and assess content. Critical scrutiny should likewise be brought to bear on the media culture. The present-day media landscape is widely diversified, but there is also a high degree of concentration, putting content and information into the hands of a few multinational oligopolies and hence increasing the threat to the independence and variety of information. Media literacy should enable citizens to critically assess whether and to what extent the interests of media producers are influencing the content of output and the form in which it has been presented.

The idea is that recipients should be able to take their own decisions without letting themselves be brainwashed by outside operators.

**c) *Media texts produced by users themselves and security in the use of new technologies***

Attention should also focus on creative output from users. By producing their own content and media products, users acquire abilities affording them a deeper insight into the principles and values of media content that has been produced professionally. Media production has to go hand in hand with critical reflection on the production process: otherwise the end result would be reduced to a purely technical operation.

Today the Internet offers users countless possibilities for producing their own content and making it accessible to all. Especially where young people are concerned, the computer and the Internet are the main tools employed in order to gain access to, and use, the media. Given that there are these simple ways to communicate and find information, practical media education must also shed light on copyright-related aspects of media use and data security.

**4) SPECIFIC DEMANDS**

**a) *Media education as a component of teacher training***

Media education cannot be provided in schools unless teachers are themselves media literate and have been given the necessary training. The proper national authorities should therefore be called upon to ensure that, when they undergo in-service training, teachers of all subjects, at every type of school, learn both about the use of audiovisual teaching aids and about the problems associated with media education. In addition, compulsory media education modules should be incorporated into teacher training for all school levels, so as to enable the subject to be taught intensively.

**b) *Media education in schools***

Western and eastern European curricula differ greatly as far as media education is concerned. Whereas the subject is given varying degrees of prominence in the EU-15 Member States, it

does not exist in any of the central and eastern European countries except Hungary and Slovenia. But schools do have an essential role to play in moulding people capable of communicating and of exercising judgement. Far from being confined to individual subjects or school levels, media education should form part and parcel of the curriculum at every stage of schooling, taking into account the pupils' level of attainment in each instance. People with disabilities and those attending special schools should likewise be given the opportunity to take part in the relevant courses.

Media education could be combined most usefully with economic, political, literary, social, and artistic subjects. This implies a need for an interdisciplinary approach, possibly combined with out-of-school projects.

***c) Media education at university and out of school***

Not only can media education be offered within the school system, but it can also be encompassed within lifelong learning. One possibility at university level might be to establish media education within the new bachelor's and master's degree courses, for instance to teach students to exercise their discernment when using search engines. Partnerships are essential in order to foster such approaches. It is important for all stakeholders within and outside the school system to work together to enable support for media education to extend to basic and further training and to exchange models based on best practice across national borders.

***d) Media education for older people***

Media education activities are aimed less frequently at older people than at young people. Parents in particular are often less proficient than their children when it comes to dealing with information and communications technologies.

It is important for media work with older people to be done at the places where they are to be found, including for example societies, old people's and nursing homes, assisted living facilities, recreational and enthusiasts' clubs, action committees, or senior citizens' groups; the different kinds of environment in which participants live, and their varied spheres of experience, should be taken into account.

Another aim should be to dispel the apprehensions and inhibitions that this target group have where new media are concerned. Older people with restricted mobility can be helped, by means of digital networks, to participate more actively in the life of society and can thus enhance their quality of life.

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

<b>Date adopted</b>	6.11.2008
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 22 -: 3 0: 0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Maria Badia i Cutchet, Ivo Belet, Guy Bono, Nicodim Bulzesc, Marie-Hélène Descamps, Jolanta Dičkutė, Věra Flasarová, Milan Gaľa, Vasco Graça Moura, Luis Herrero-Tejedor, Ruth Hieronymi, Ramona Nicole Mănescu, Manolis Mavrommatis, Ljudmila Novak, Dumitru Oprea, Zdzisław Zbigniew Podkański, Christa Prets, Pál Schmitt, Helga Trüpel, Thomas Wise, Tomáš Zatloukal
<b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>	Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, Ewa Tomaszewska, Cornelis Visser, Jaroslav Zvěřina