

Media Literacy

MEDIA



Just as we are taught to read and write, we need to understand how the various types of media work and how to critically evaluate their content. With the developments in Information and Communication Technologies, the media environment has been changing rapidly. Media play an increasingly important role in our everyday life. They allow us to participate in democratic and cultural life. This is why the European Commission has issued guidelines for this skill, referred to as "*Media Literacy*". *Media Literacy* is about being able to access all media - from radio to social networks, from digital TV to the printed press and the most recent mobile devices - to fully exploit their potential and to use them in a critical, active and creative manner. This is a fundamental part of our basic entitlement to full citizenship and democratic participation. Media literate citizens will have a higher degree of freedom because they will be able to choose and evaluate their sources and actively participate in the information society. .

Media Literacy

Media literacy relates to all media, including television and film, radio and recorded music, print media, the Internet and all other new digital communication technologies. Citizens need to have acquired the skills to access and use all the different media available to them: How is a TV programme produced? Which sources on the Internet are trustworthy? What can we take for granted and where do we need to go deeper into the issue and ask questions?

Media literacy is a basic skill not only for the young generation but also for adults and elderly people, for parents, teachers and media professionals. The older generation may need training on how to access different sources, the younger generation might need guidance on which sources to trust.

All users need to understand how and why media content is produced and need to be able to evaluate how trustworthy different sources are. The Commission considers media literacy to be an important factor for active citizenship in today's information society. All citizens should be "media literate" enough to access, analyse and evaluate images, sounds and texts and use all media to communicate and create content.

Be smart online

Media literacy training could improve the way citizens use search engines, show school children how a film is made or how advertising works. In some countries (for example Sweden, Ireland, UK) media literacy is already part of the school curriculum.

The UK's kidSMART website shows young people how to use social networking sites safely. Education is a national competence, but the Commission has invited EU countries to open a debate on how to give media literacy a prominent place in schools.

Be aware of risks

People using media need to be aware of the risks connected to the spread of their personal data. The more skilled they are in using these technologies, and the more savvy they are about how online advertising works, the better they can protect their privacy. People who are more media literate will also be more curious about and explore their cultural heritage and recent European cultural works.

Commission actions

- The Commission's initiative on media literacy responds to requests by the European Parliament and industry together with a number of Member States. At the end of 2007, the Commission adopted a communication on media literacy which adds a further building block to European audiovisual policy and links to the provisions of the **Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMS)**¹. Article 26 in this Directive introduced an obligation for the Commission to report on levels of media literacy in all EU countries.
- In 2008, the Council and the European Parliament adopted respectively conclusions and an own initiative report on media literacy.
- The Commission adopted a recommendation on media literacy in August 2009. It calls on EU member states and industry to promote media literacy across Europe.

Next steps

In 2009 and 2010 the Commission will continue to promote Media Literacy by building on existing activities such as

¹ The *Audiovisual Media Services Directive* sets European standards for audiovisual services and entered into force in December 2007.

- **MEDIA 2007**,² the **MEDIA International preparatory action**³, the **AVMS directive** and other initiatives.
- A study to develop criteria for assessing media literacy levels has been launched, in line with the obligations laid down in the AVMS directive
- In the framework of the 2009 **MEDIA International preparatory action**, the Commission has granted support to two projects aiming at educating and raising awareness of the European public, especially the young generation, about cinematographic and audiovisual works of non-European countries and vice versa.
- By 2011, the Commission will report on "media literacy levels" in all member states.



Further information:

Media Literacy:
http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/media_literacy/index_en.htm
MEDIA 2007 programme:
<http://ec.europa.eu/media>

² The *MEDIA Programme* supports the development and distribution of films and training activities, festivals and promotion projects.

³ The preparatory action *MEDIA International* aims to explore ways of reinforcing cooperation between European and third-country professionals from the audiovisual industry on a basis of mutual benefit. It also aims to encourage a two-way flow of cinematographic/audiovisual works.