

Media literacy in a digital world

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The European Parliament adopted by 583 votes to 23 with 4 abstentions, a resolution on media literacy in a digital world. The own-initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Christa **PRETS** (PES, IT) on behalf of the Committee on Culture and Education.

Parliament welcomed the Commission's communication [COM\(2007\)0833](#) on the same issue. However, it 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.

To recall, the report 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. The media provide opportunities for global communications and openness to the world, however, the user must be aware of potential risks associated with it.

In this context, Parliament 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.

In addition, they request the authorities responsible for regulating audiovisual and electronic communications to cooperate at the various levels for the improvement of media literacy.

Codes of conduct: Parliament recognises the special need to develop at national level both codes of conduct and common regulatory initiatives and highlight 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. It also 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.

Promote media literacy: Parliament calls on the Commission to devise media literacy indicators with a view to fostering media literacy in the EU in the long term. It also urges it 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.

The report also focuses on a number of key areas such as:

- **Aims and target groups:** media education activities have to encompass all citizens – children, young people, adults, older people, and people with disabilities. MEPs consider that acquiring media literacy begins in the home with learning how to select from the media services available and continues at school and during lifelong learning. They note 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. They recommend 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.

- **Intellectual property rights and cyber-violence:** Parliament 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. It 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 cyber-violence;
- **Access to information and communications technologies:** Parliament 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. It is proposed to provide access to inexpensive, high quality broadband Internet for all.
- **Media education in schools and as a component of teacher training:** Parliament maintains that media education should be an element of formal education to which all children should have access. It calls for media literacy to be made the ninth key competence in the European reference framework for lifelong learning ([COD/2005/0221](#)). It 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. MEPs also recommend 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. They note that, in addition to educational and education-policy considerations, technical equipment and access to new technologies are also of vital importance, and maintain 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. The report recommends that compulsory media education modules be incorporated into teacher training for all school levels. The Commission is called upon to devote a specific section of the successor to the MEDIA programme to promoting media literacy.
- **Media education for older people:** MEPs note that digital networks enable older people in particular to share in everyday life by communicating and to remain independent for as long as possible.

Lastly, Parliament requests the authorities responsible for regulating audiovisual and electronic communications to cooperate at the various levels for the improvement of media literacy. It recognises the special need to develop at national level both codes of conduct and common regulatory initiatives.