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A new notion of media?
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Greece

Teaching the new alphabet of mass media

In the digital environment Media Literacy is becoming a crucial element for promoting citizens' active participation in the democratic life of society. It empowers citizens with the critical thinking to make them judicious consumers and active producers of content ("pro-sumers") and helps them to recognise how the media filter perceptions and beliefs, shape popular culture and influence personal choices. Additionally, media literacy may serve as an "agent" able to control and exert social, political and economic influence in the media field and the information society.

As new information and communication technologies make it ever easier for anyone to retrieve and disseminate information, communicate, publish or broadcast, media literacy becomes even more essential for active citizenship and democracy. In this broad context, it supports freedom of expression and the right to information, helping to build and sustain democracy. There is also a link between media literacy and better regulation, because a media-literate society is one that is empowered to make its own judgments and choices, and is therefore, in less need of detailed protective rules.

Moreover, a more specific parameter to focus on the field of media literacy is the notion of commercial literacy, with a special report on the audiovisual media. By commercial literacy we are referring to the ability of users to adopt a critical attitude towards the various existing contexts of commercial communication and therefore, being able to decode, interpret and analyze the direct or indirect media messages, basically driven by the market economy.

The need for media literacy, education and protection in the new digital era is more than ever evident in the media advertising market. Nowadays, the variety of commercials images, symbols and visuals instantly attract the viewer's attention through the use of promotional advertising techniques. The case applies mostly to young people and children, who tend to accept without any inside critical process, all the commercials messages, rendering them passive features of the consumer society. Commercial literacy targets exactly this phenomenon by helping young people to critically read and decode the advertisements in an innovative way, especially on television, the most popular medium so far. Additionally, commercial literacy can help young people to raise awareness and learn how to protect themselves towards the "cataclysm" of the media brand-oriented messages. In this context, we suggest putting forward a proposal for all member-states to take action on regulatory and self-regulatory issues in the advertising media industry, building thus a "protection shield" towards media consumerism and aiming to the direct and indirect protection of all citizens, especially young people.

Main objectives of Media Literacy:

- to allow access to all kinds of media;
- to develop skills for the critical analysis of messages (in news, entertainment, infotainment, commercial communication);
- for all users to be able to create and produce content by themselves in the new digital environment, taking into account the copyright issues that may derive from that use (user empowerment).

In conclusion the member states should:

- support the international co-operation in media literacy;
- call on states to co-operate further in improving people's level of media literacy, especially on issues of commercial communication;
- promote the development and exchange of good practice on media literacy in the digital environment;

- **develop and implement codes of conduct and co-regulation frameworks with all interested parties at national level.**