

Editorial

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Media Programme (EU) - International Support for Media Education

El Programa «Media» de la Comisión Europea, apoyo internacional a la educación en medios

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For more than a decade, the European Union (EU) has decisively supported the promotion of media literacy within the framework of European Member States, i.e. with the objective of promoting a more active, critical, and participative citizenship in Information Society.

The volume of information that the EU receives, in addition to new forms of media access and communication processing, requires a new set of skills to access, analyze and evaluate images, sound and text, which, from a wider perspective, incorporate audio-visual and multimedia support in digital environments. In this sense, the European Commission considers media literacy as a key strategic objective in modern democracies, namely where traditional literacy at the start of the 20th century was formerly a challenge for schools and modern societies, whereas today, media literacy is a key requirement of the 21st century's technically advanced society – in other words, «the digital world». In this sense, media literacy can be understood as having access to the media, knowing about its various facets, having a critical perspective of its contents, and creating communication in multiple contexts.

Over the last few years, the Commission has provided finance with the following aims: to analyze the various manifestations of mass communication and its values from a multi-media perspective; to promote, produce, and distribute mass media with significant content; to encourage the usage of mass media with the objective of promoting greater participation in social and community life; to create networks in education for media purposes; and lastly, to implement media literacy initiatives such as establishing linkages between the media industry and the world of education.

The culminating moment of the role of the Commission in the institutional development of media education occurred in late 2007, i.e. when a Directive was approved within the field of European audio-visual policy and media literacy. For the first time, Article 33 stipulated that all Member States were to inform the Commission about their media literacy levels. The Commission's initiative was thus a timely answer to the growing petitions of industry and the European Parliament. A year later, in 2008, the Council and the European Parliament approved the conclusions and the report on the media literacy initiative, respectively.

In 2009, however, the Commission presented a Recommendation for Media Literacy, requesting that all the countries in the EU engage in the promotion and dissemination of media in its various formats of spreading messages and support: cinema, TV, Internet, etc. The 6494 Recommendation (2009) on Media Literacy in Digital Environments for a More Competitive Audio-visual Industry in an Inclusive Knowledge Society can be viewed online here: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/media-content/media-literacy/c_2009_6464_es_1.pdf

On November 27th 2009, the Council approved a Recommendation on Media Literacy for Digital Environments, which was adopted by the European Council for Education, Youth and Culture (http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/media-content/media-literacy/council_adoption_ml_27112009.pdf), thus reaffirming its commitment to literacy by means of Recommendation 6464 (August 20th, 2009). Please see: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/media-content/media-literacy/c_2009_6464_en_1.pdf for more details.



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The European Commission also aims to promote norms of practice and financial projects via programs such as: «Media», «Media Mundus», and through other reports and investigations. The webpage for the program can be accessed online at: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/media-literacy/index_en.htm.



Following these activities, the Commission facilitated the creation of a Group of Experts on Media Literacy, whose initial phase commenced in 2006 and terminated in 2010. Then, a year later, in 2011, the Group of Experts received important, additional backing for the project. As a result of the 2009 Recommendation on Media Literacy in Digital Environments, the Commission urged Member States to open up a debate on the possible inclusion of media literacy in the curriculum of obligatory education. For this reason, this group was to be comprised of representatives from all Member States. Its objective is to examine the current state of media literacy in schools in all the represented countries, and to debate its possible inclusion in formal education. Please see: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/media-literacy/expert-group-2011_en.htm.

Another important initiative of the Commission has been its support of the audio-visual sector and European cinema from the perspective of media literacy, i.e. within the framework of the Creative Europe proposal. In this case, the European Commission carried out a macro-survey of all the European audio-visual media sectors, including television and cinema, radio and music, printed media, the Internet, and new technologies used in digitally recorded communication. It was concluded that within the context of European cinema there existed a need to obtain the interest of a younger audience. For this reason, media literacy became an essential component within the framework of obligatory education. The survey's respondents highlighted that training should likewise focus on teachers, journalists, and media literacy professionals. By the same token, the survey underlined the importance of increasing both the availability of European films for today's youth and establishing a cinematic patrimony of European cinema.

On the other hand, research and reports also form an integral part of the main strategic lines of action of the European Union. Among the studies that the Commission has promoted, we can highlight the following: Criteria for Media Evaluation: Literacy Levels in Europe (2010), which can be found online (<http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/media-content/media-literacy/studies/final-report-ml-study-2011.pdf>); A Study on the Evaluation of Literacy Criteria and Levels (2009); and An Integral Vision of the Concept of Media Literacy and Strategies of How to Evaluate Media Literacy Levels in Europe: (http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/media-content/media-literacy/studies/eavi_study_assess_crit_media_lit_levels_europe_finrep.pdf), the latter of which was carried out by CLEMI, France; the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB); EAVI- Belgium; the Catholic University of Louvain, and the University of Tampere (Finland).

Finally, we must not forget that another interesting study of the group was: Current Trends and Foci of Media Literacy in Europe (2007), which covered the twenty-seven Member States of the European Union and EEA Member States. This project was carried out by the UAB Initiative: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/media-content/media-literacy/studies/eavi_study_assess_crit_media_lit_levels_europe_finrep.pdf.

Among the more current programs of the Commission, we can highlight the following: Media Mundus (http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/mediamundus/index_en.htm); Creative Europe: (http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/creative-europe/index_en.htm); Digital Distribution: (http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/digitaldistribution/index_en.htm), and, of course, Media Literacy (http://ec.europa.eu/culture/media/media-literacy/index_en.htm), the latter of which is a core strategic objective of our proposal.