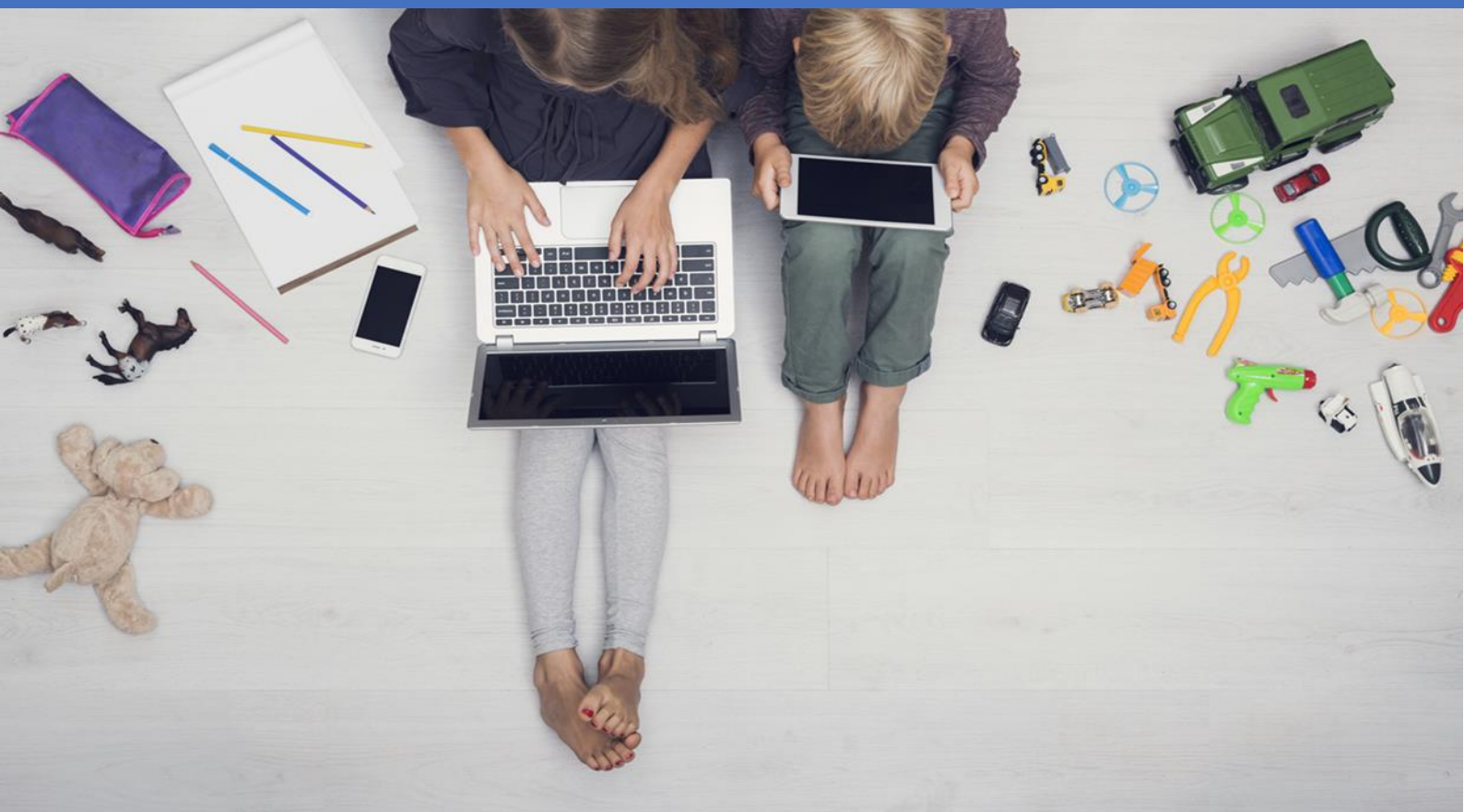


MEDIA LITERACY

Survey on media literacy among preschool children in Serbia



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Co-funded
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Co-funded and implemented
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This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union and the Council of Europe, through the joint programme "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye". It was developed with the support of the joint action "Freedom of expression and freedom of the media in Serbia (JUFREX)" (2019–2022) and it was published within the joint action "Protecting freedom of expression and of the media in Serbia (PRO-FREX)" (2023–2026).

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1 INTRODUCTION

The digital environment in the modern age for children and young people is part of the *normality of everyday life* – the new generations were born with the internet and modern technology and do not know the world without it. The concepts of media and digital literacy have now been used for decades by researchers as well as those who warn against the negative aspects of the digital age. Although the very roots of media literacy date back to the 1970s, one of the first [definitions of the concept](#)¹ was adopted in 1992 at a conference on media literacy. In short, media literacy is the ability of citizens to access, analyse, evaluate and produce messages through printed and electronic media. It implies the ability to *use media and media content independently and responsibly*, and in order to be able to use media safely and sensibly, it is of particular importance to teach children how to access different media and the digital environment. *Media literacy is the basis for participation in modern society and it is necessary to learn it from an early age.*

As part of media education, parents and educators/teachers should support children to find their way in the digital world and at the same time protect them from certain risks. Striving for media literacy education means meeting the needs of individuals of different ages. However, the same principle cannot be applied to all age categories. Individuals' needs and interests in media literacy education change throughout life. For example, at later age, media literacy education may be particularly important for cognitive functioning, social relationships, and the critical evaluation and use of health-related information and services. On the other hand, in childhood, media literacy education is expected to support children's well-being, self-expression, play, inclusion, and safety needs.²

In order for children later in life to be able to be functionally media literate (to recognise the role and function of media in a democratic society; to critically analyse content; to use media for democratic participation and self-expression; to have skills for content production), it is crucial to work with them from an early age.

Due to all of the above, before conducting research on media literacy among preschool children within the project "Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Media in Serbia (JUFREX)", two workshops were organised under the name "Media Literacy Open Days" (6 and 7 October in Belgrade and Novi Sad). The topic of the workshops was media literacy of preschool children, which was attended by representatives of state and private preschool institutions (principals and preschool teachers) from the territory of Belgrade and Novi Sad. The aim of the workshops was to highlight the need to raise awareness of media literacy and critical thinking regarding audio-visual information for preschool children. Workshop

¹ <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED365294.pdf>

² Rasi, P., Vuojärvi, H., & Ruokamo, H. (2019). Media Literacy Education for All Ages. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 11(2), 1-19.

participants were presented with publications³ that were produced as part of the project and that can be used in daily work with preschool children on media literacy.

Following the workshops, a survey was conducted to examine media literacy among preschool children, from the point of view of employees in preschool institutions. Given that research involving preschool children is too complex (both for the very operationalisation of the concept of media literacy for children of that age, as well as for ethical reasons), the perception of employees in preschool educational institutions about this area is of great importance.

The research presented herein, aimed to mark the media literacy of preschool children, from the point of view of employees in preschool educational institutions. The research was conducted in October 2022, on a sample of 430 employees (primarily teachers, but also principals and other staff in preschool institutions).⁴ The research was conducted in an online form with employees of preschool institutions on the territory of Belgrade and Novi Sad, with predominantly female respondents. The average number of years of work experience is 17.6, which is good for this research because the respondents have been in contact with children for a long time and have an idea of changes over time and generations.

³ Publications are available at <http://www.rem.rs/sr/dodatno/projekti/medijska-pismenost#gsc.tab=0>

⁴ All terms used in the masculine grammatical gender include the masculine and feminine genders of the person they refer to.

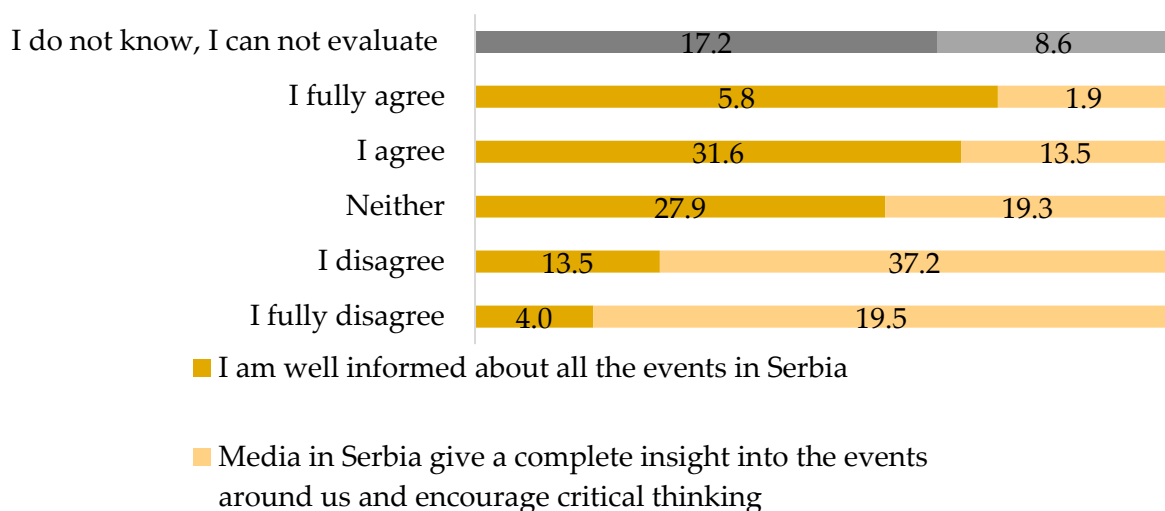
2 RESEARCH RESULTS

The questionnaire filled out by the respondents electronically contained a set of questions aimed at getting to know the media habits of the respondents themselves, assessment of the use of media and social networks by preschool children, possibilities and needs of introducing media literacy in preschool institutions. Finally, the respondents were asked to assess the needs, give recommendations and suggest ways to further improve critical thinking in preschool children.

Media habits and use of social networks by employees in preschool institutions

Graph 1 shows the attitude of employees in preschool institutions towards the media in Serbia and the self-assessment of being informed about daily political events in Serbia. Employees in preschool institutions⁵ **stated that they are well informed about events in Serbia** – a total of 37.4% of respondents stated that they are well-informed, 17.5% that they do not follow all the events in their country, while 27.9% were undecided. On the other hand, **employees in pre-school institutions do not believe that the media give a complete insight into the events around us and encourage critical thinking**. Thus, collectively, even 56.7% more or less disagree with the statement that the media in Serbia give complete insight into the events around us and encourage critical thinking, while 15.4% think the opposite (of which only 1.9% completely agree with the statement). 19.3% remained undecided. Finally, 17.2% of respondents do not know or cannot assess whether they are well informed about events in their country, and a smaller share (8.6%) cannot assess whether the media in Serbia provide complete insight into events around us and encourage critical thinking.

Graph 1. To what extent do you agree with the following statements..., in %

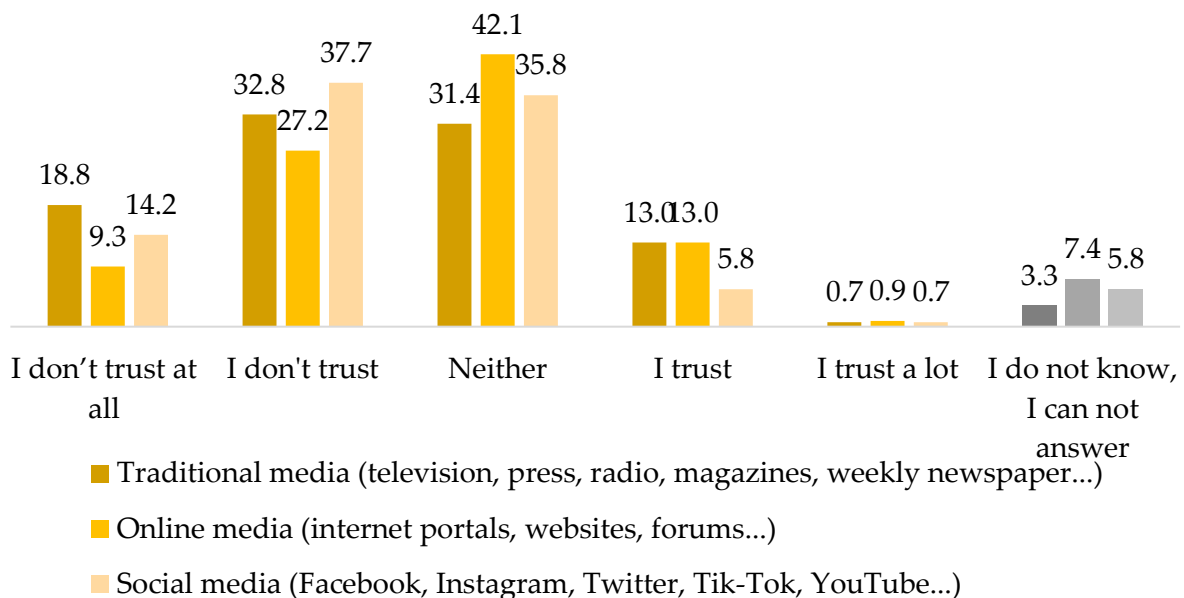


⁵ Unless explicitly stated, it also refers to principals, educators and other employees in the institution.

Distrust of the media in Serbia is dominant among employees in preschool institutions

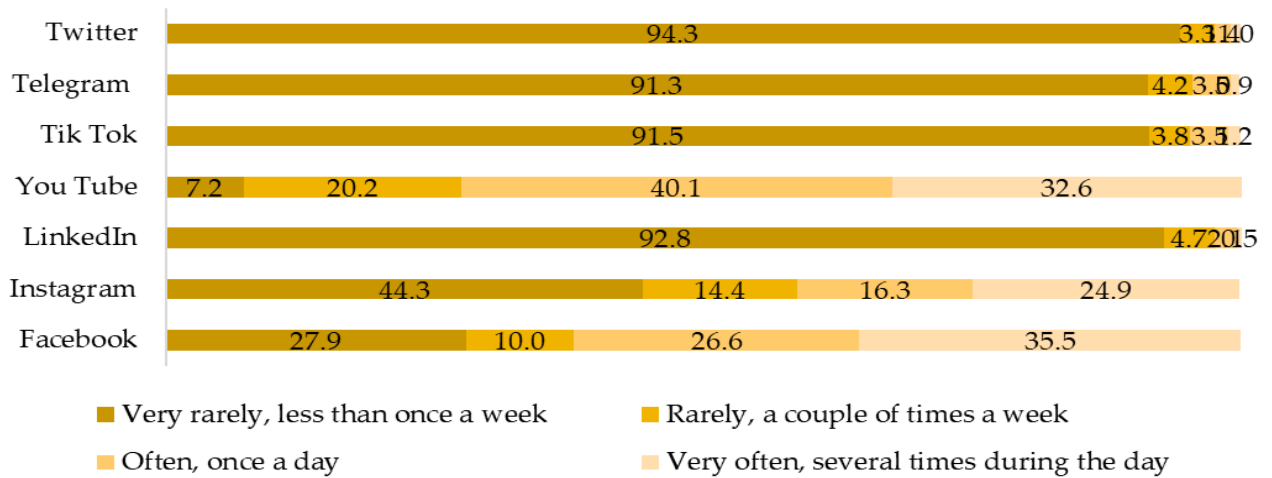
– Graph 2. 13.7% trust traditional media, 13.9% more or less trust online media, and only 6.5% more or less trust social networks. On the other hand, the majority of respondents more or less do not trust traditional media in Serbia (51.6%), as well as social networks (51.9%), and over a third of respondents have more or less distrust in online media (36.5%). However, there is also a significant number of those who are undecided – about a third of those surveyed stated that they neither have nor have no trust in traditional media and social networks, and over two fifths (42.1%) stated that they neither trust nor distrust online media. Such findings, which show that distrust is greater than trust, and that there is also a significant number of undecided respondents, does not deviate from the already established findings in public opinion surveys when it comes to citizens' trust in the media in Serbia.

Graph 2. Trust in the media (Do you trust the following media...), in %



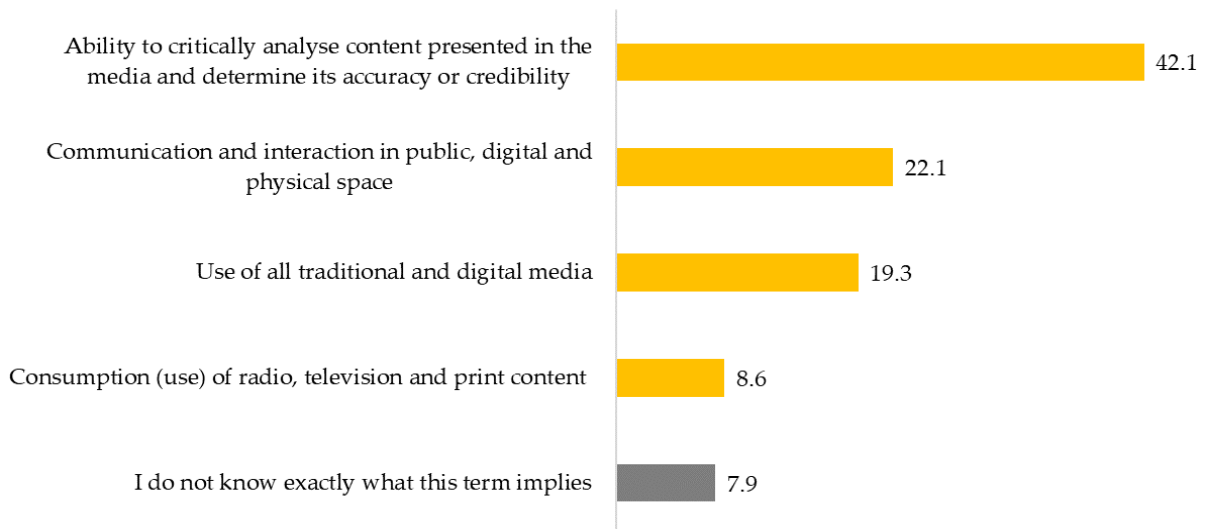
Considering the trend of increasingly widespread use of social networks, respondents were asked to indicate which social networks they use and how often. First of all, it should be noted that **about 15% of respondents stated that they do not use social networks**, and these are primarily older respondents. Among those who use social networks (Graph 3), **the most prevalent is YouTube** (72.7% use this network often or very often), **Facebook** (62.1% use this network often or very often) and **Instagram** (41.2% use this network often or very often). On the other hand, LinkedIn, Twitter, Telegram and Tik Tok are hardly used – over 95% of respondents who have these networks say that they use them either very rarely (less than once a week) or rarely (a couple of times a week). This distribution is not surprising, because the most popular social networks are precisely those that our respondents use the most, and the increasingly popular network Tik Tok is mostly consumed by teenagers and young people under 30, who are the least in the sample.

Graph 3. Which social networks do you use and how often?, in %



Furthermore, the survey provided an insight into what the respondents understand by media literacy, by being asked to provide their opinion on what the term media literacy implies—Graph 4.

Graph 4. In your opinion, what does the term “media literacy” refer to?, in %

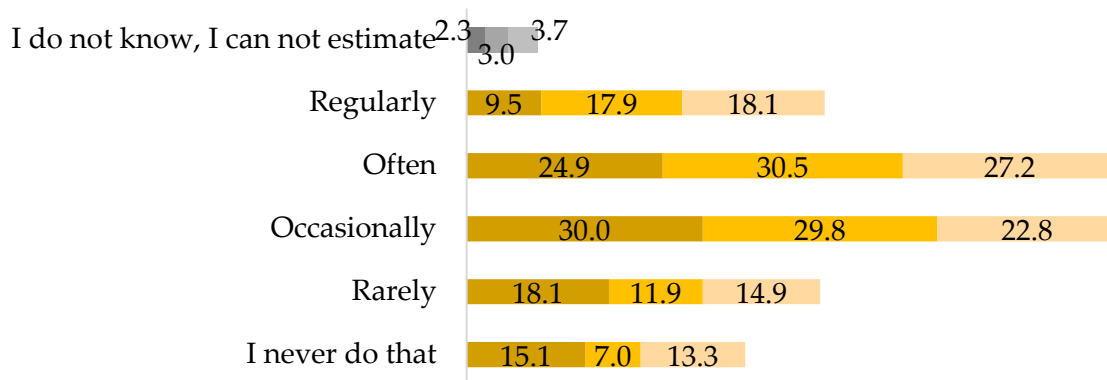


Over two-fifths of respondents (42.1%) know that media literacy implies the ability to critically analyse the content presented in the media and determine its accuracy or credibility. For a little over a fifth of respondents (22.1%), media literacy implies communication and interaction in public, digital and physical space, and every fifth respondent (19.3%) believes that media literacy implies the use of all traditional and digital media. 8.6% of respondents say that media literacy is the consumption of radio, television and press content, while 7.9% openly admit that they do not know what this term refers to. **This finding that more than half of the respondents do not have entirely accurate understanding of the**

media literacy concept. is an indicator that there is room for awareness raising among the employees in preschool institutions.

The survey further examined media habits of respondents with a set of questions aimed to understand if media literacy is practiced, in addition to the concept being understood– Graph 5.

Graph 5. To what extent do the following media habits suit you personally and do you behave in accordance with the above..., in %



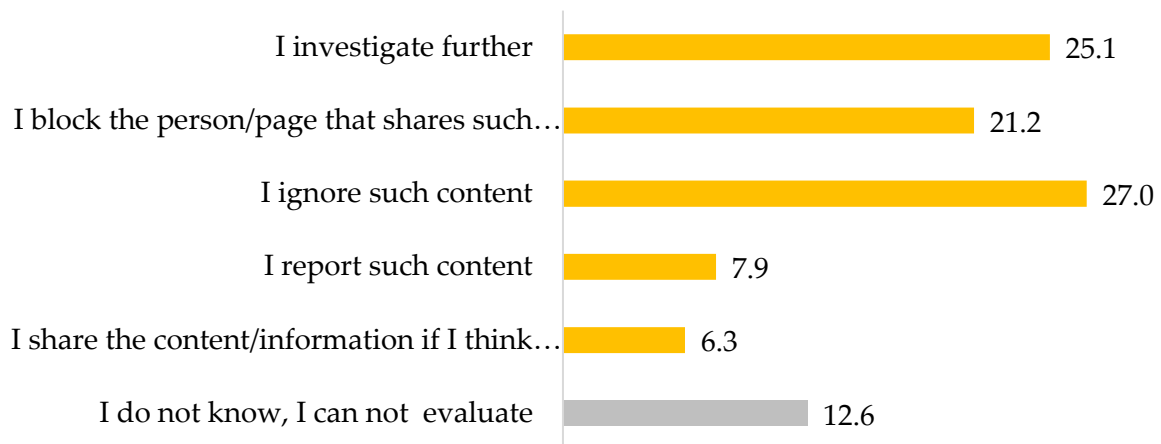
- I always check all news from several different sources to make sure they are accurate.
- I do not just care about information, I always check the wider picture and the context behind it.
- I always check the source of the media content I access

Every third respondent (34.4%) often or regularly checks all news from different sources, in order to be sure of their accuracy. Almost every second respondent (48.4%) says that not only information is important to them, but also that they always or often check the bigger picture and the context behind that information. While slightly less than half of the respondents (45.3%) regularly or often check the source of the media content they are accessing.

In conclusion **most important part for respondents is to check the bigger picture and the context behind the information**, as only 7% of respondents stated they never do this. Likewise, respondents found relevant the source behind media content and the need to check several different sources, but given that it requires additional effort and time, those who admit that they never do it hence constitutes a slightly higher share – 15.1% in the case of checking news from several different sources, i.e. 13.3% when it comes to checking sources for the media content they access. Based on the above, we can conclude that a **dominant and convincing share of the respondents still, according to their answers, follow good practise in terms of media literacy, while there is room for improvement, primarily in the frequency of checking the information and contents that reach them.**

When they come across disturbing content in the media, every fourth respondent stated that they investigate and check what it is about (25.1%), every fifth respondent blocks the person or page sharing such content (21.2%). 7.9% of them report such content, and 6.3% share it if they think it is important. However, **the largest share of respondents just ignores disturbing content in the media** (27%). 12.6% of the respondents stated that they do not know or cannot assess what to do in that situation.

Graph 6. What do you do when you come across disturbing content in the media?, in %

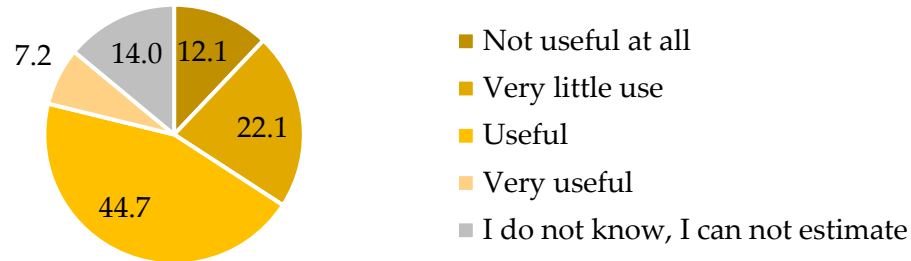


The survey indicated that the respondents do not exhibit significant differences in their responses, according to their sociodemographic characteristics.

Finally, the employees in preschool institutions were asked whether they think that, regardless of their professional experience, work and their daily activities, if it would be useful for them to strengthen their critical thinking towards media content – Graph 7.

Every second employee in a preschool institution (51.9%) stated that, regardless of professional experience, it would be useful for them to strengthen their critical thinking towards media content – of which 44.7% stated that it would be useful for them, and another 7.2% that it would benefit them a lot. On the other hand, a total of 34.2% of those surveyed do not recognise the need to improve their critical thinking towards media content – 12.1% say that it would not benefit them at all, and 22.1% that it would benefit them a little. 14% of respondents could not estimate.

Graph 7. Do you think that, regardless of your professional experience, in the work process and in your daily activities, it would be useful for you personally to strengthen your critical thinking towards media content?, in %



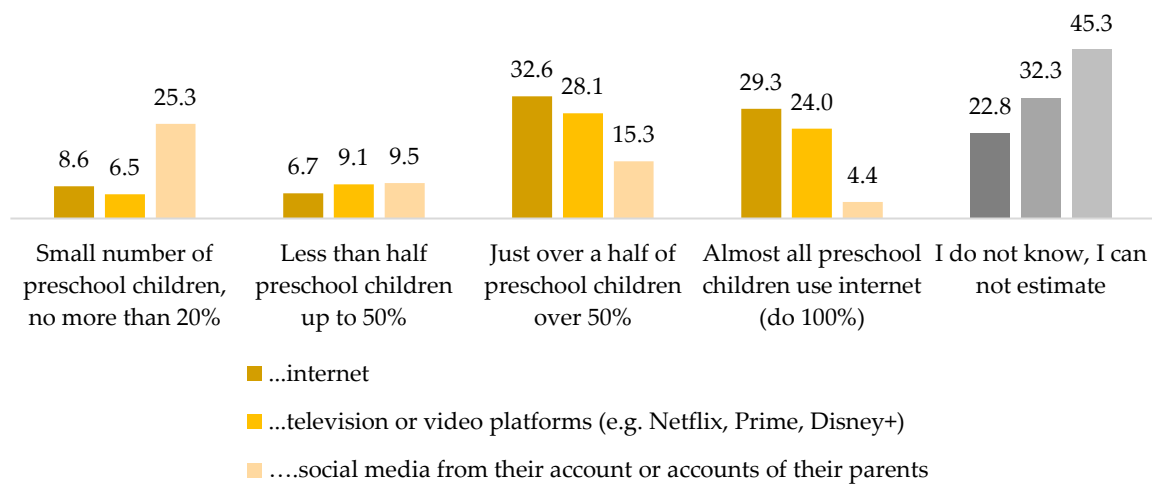
Judging by the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents, the survey recorded statistical significance only in terms of the position within the institution, that is, in terms of the length of work experience. Specifically, educators are more likely to answer that it would benefit them if they strengthened their critical thinking towards media content, while principals and employees in non-educational positions are more inclined to answer that it would benefit them a lot. Also, with the increase in years of service, the respondent is more likely to answer that it would benefit them (a lot) to strengthen their critical opinion towards media content.

Assessments of the use of media and social networks by preschool children

The survey further explored a set of questions with to the objective of gaining insight into the assessment of the use of media and social networks by preschool children. At the very beginning, it is important to underline that this is an assessment provided by the employees of preschool institutions, and that it would be good to cross-reference the findings provided by parents. However, the assessment of educators, first of all, brings with it certain advantages, primarily in that they listen to the children and talk to them, and the parents might be prone to giving a socially desirable answer.

The preschool employees were asked to give an estimate of the share of preschool children who have access to the internet, television or video platforms (for example, Netflix, Prime, Disney+), and social networks from their account or from their parents' accounts – Graph 8.

Graph 8. In your opinion, what percentage of preschoolers in your institution have access to..., in %

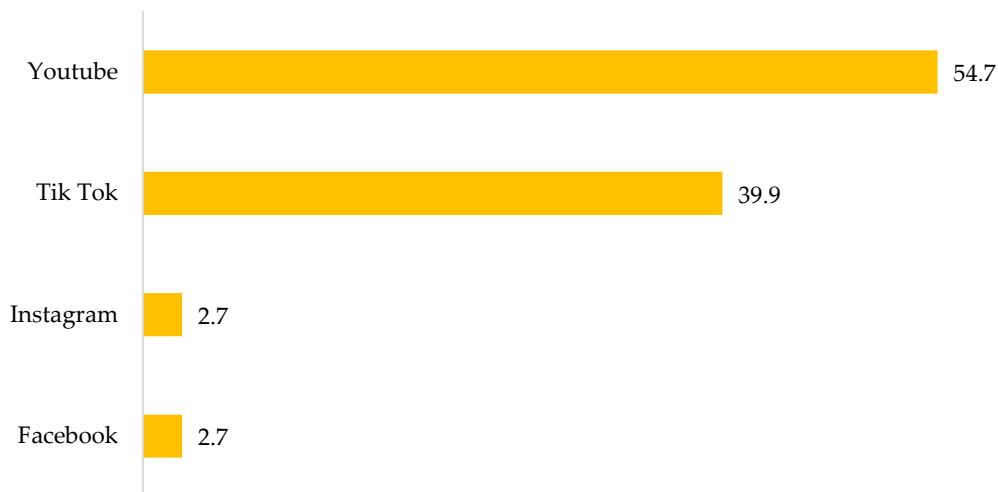


According to the assessment of employees in preschool institutions, more than half of preschool children have access to the internet (**32.6% of employees stated that more than half of preschool children have access to the internet**), and **29.3% of employees stated that almost all of their children use the internet**. Also, according to those who work with preschool children, a large part of children has access to television and video platforms (Netflix, Prime, Disney+, etc.) – 28.1% of respondents stated that over 50% of preschoolers they work with have access to video platforms and television, and almost **every fourth employee (24%) believes that all children they work with, have access to television and video platforms**.

On the other hand, those who work with children in the preschool education system believe that the situation is different with regard to social networks. **The largest number of respondents (25.3%) believe that only a small number of preschool children have access to social networks from their account or their parents' account**, 9.5% believe that slightly less than half of children have this access, 15.3% say that this is the case with slightly more than half of children, and only 4.4% of employees believe that all children have access to social networks. Also, it is important to note that this is the information about which the employees of preschool institutions are not the most confident – a large part of the respondents did not show their willingness to give an assessment about access to social networks – as many as 45.3%, who say that they cannot assess or do not know this information. Regarding access to television, video platforms and the internet, the willingness to give an answer is higher (32.3% and 22.8%, respectively, did not know how to answer this question).

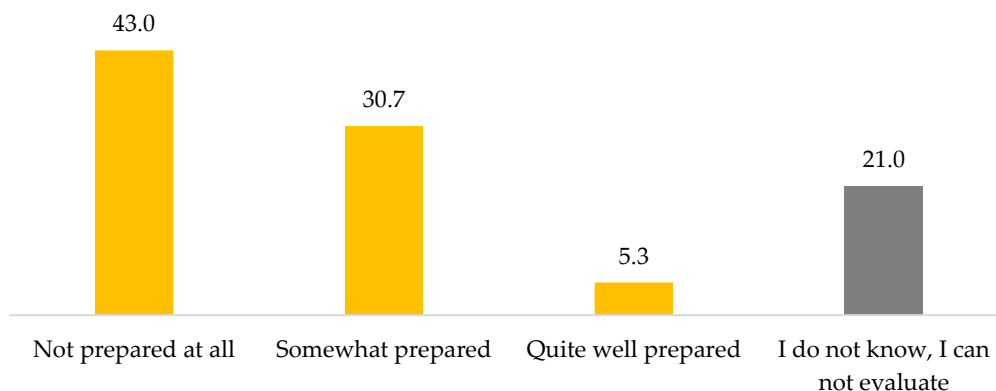
Those who were ready to give their assessment and who believe that preschool children have access to social networks stated that **the largest number of children use YouTube (54.7%) and Tik Tok (39.9%)**. On the other hand, **Instagram and Facebook are networks that are not popular among children of that age** – Graph 9.

Graph 9. Can you estimate which social network is the most common among preschoolers?, in %



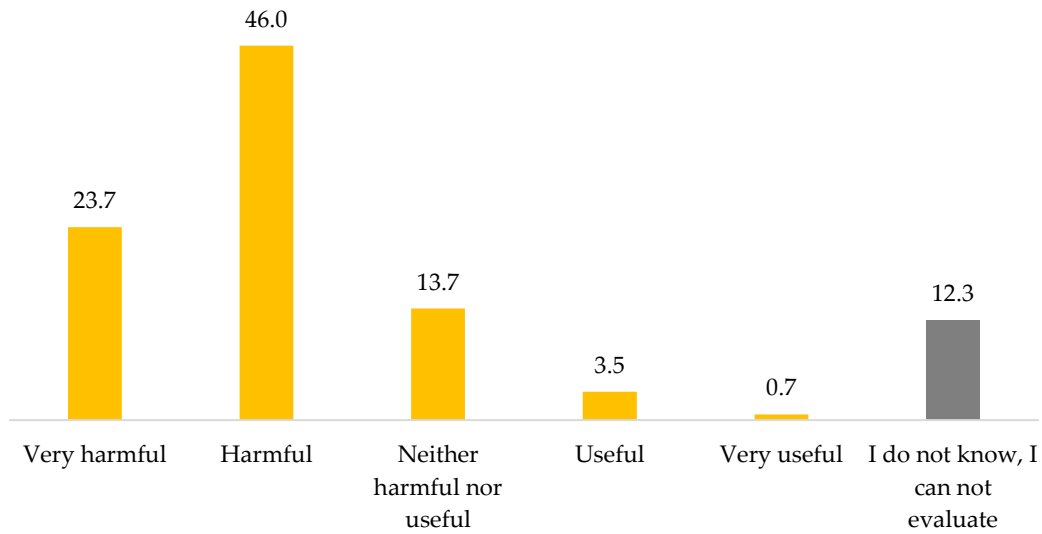
Over two-fifths of professionals who work with preschool children (43%) believe that children are not adequately prepared for the use of social networks, and another 30.7% believe that they are somewhat prepared, but not sufficiently – Graph 10. In other words, **73.7% of respondents believe that there is more or less room for improving children's readiness to use social networks**. Only 5.3% of respondents disagree with this view, and every fourth person has no view.

Graph 10. From your pedagogical experience, would you say that your preschoolers are adequately prepared for using social networks?, in %



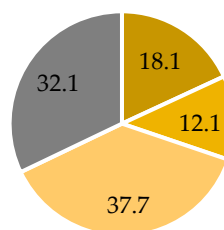
The importance of children's preparedness for using social networks is particularly indicated by the fact that a total of **even 69.7% of respondents believe that the influence of social networks on preschool children is harmful or very harmful** – Graph 11. The opposite opinion, that the influence of social networks on children is useful or very useful, is held by only 4.2% of respondents, and 13.7% are undecided and stated that this influence is neutral, neither harmful nor useful.

Graph 11. Do you think that the influence of social networks on preschoolers is harmful or useful?, in %



According to 18.1% of respondents, children of preschool age have access to television or online video platforms under the supervision of their parents, 12.1% say that this access is without parental supervision but in scheduled times provided for that age, and the **largest share of respondents (37.7%) believes that children probably have access to television or online video platforms without parental supervision and outside of scheduled times.** Every third respondent does not know how to answer this question.

Graph 12. In your opinion, do preschool children have access to television or online video platforms under parental supervision or in scheduled times provided for that age (children's programmes and educational programmes), in %

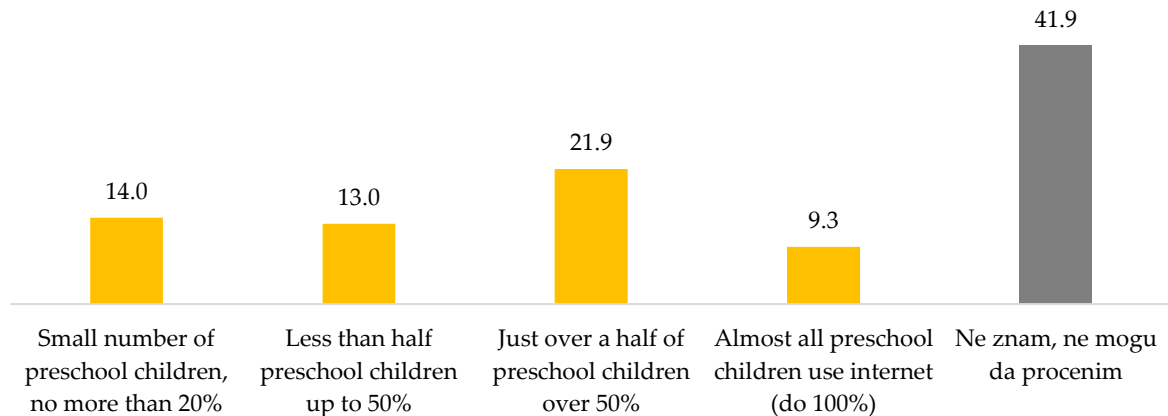


- Under parental supervision
- Without supervision but within timeframe envisaged for their age
- Probably without supervision and outside of timeframe foreseen for them
- I do not know, I can not evaluate

However, in terms of exposure to content that is not appropriate for their age, **the largest number of those who work with preschool children cannot assess whether they are exposed to content that is inappropriate for their age – 41.9%** (Graph 13). Among those

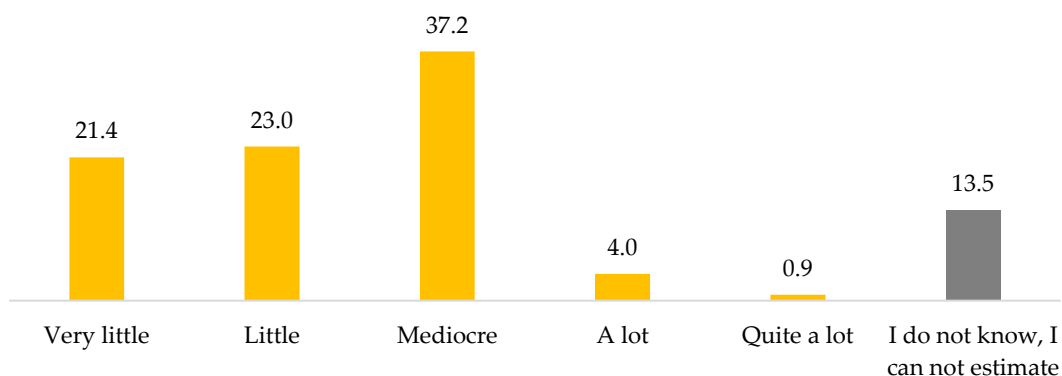
who believe that they have an insight into the content that the children are exposed to, **the most common answer is that more than half of children are exposed to audio-visual content that is not appropriate for their age, and this is what 21.9% of respondents stated.**

Graph 13. In your opinion, what percentage of preschoolers in your institution are exposed to audio-visual content (media) that is not intended for their age?, in %



Additionally, when asked "Have you noticed that a child of preschool age was exposed to media content, inappropriate for that age?" 32.8% of the respondents stated that they did not notice, **36.3% noticed that a child of preschool age was exposed to media content inappropriate for that age**, and 30.9% did not know or could not assess.

Graph 14. According to your pedagogical experience, to what extent do parents take care of children's media education, digital security and their behaviour on social networks?, in %

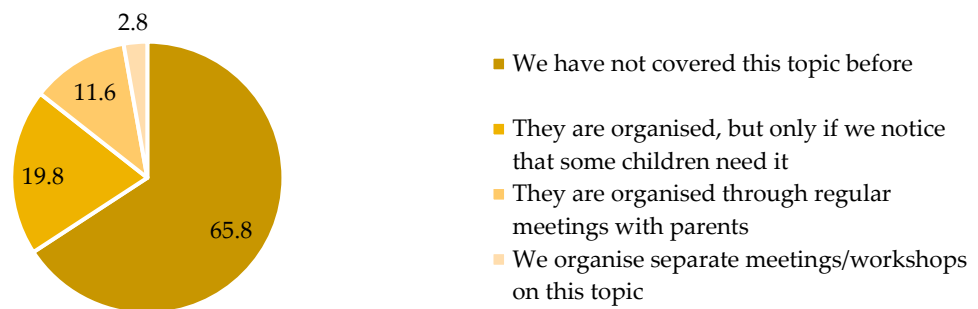


In accordance with the previous answers, it is not surprising that a total of **44.4% of employees in preschool institutions believe that parents pay very little or little attention to children's media education, digital security and their behaviour on social networks.** 37.2% of respondents think that parents' care is average, and only 4.9% think that parents take a lot or very much care about this. 13.5% of respondents did not know how to answer this question.

Possibilities of introducing media literacy in preschool institutions

When asked "Does your institution organise discussions with parents on media literacy and children's digital security, as well as on the use of social networks?" (Graph 15) **65.8% of respondents say that they had not dealt with the issue of media literacy in their preschool until now**. 19.8% of respondents say that discussions with parents regarding media literacy are organised, but only if they notice that there is a need for it among certain children. 11.6% of respondents say that this topic is discussed through regular parent meetings, and only 2.8% of them say that they organise special meetings or workshops on this topic with parents.

Graph 15. Does your institution organise discussions with parents on media literacy and children's digital security, as well as on the use of social networks?, in %



After such a finding, it is clear that there is plenty of room for employees of preschool institutions to work with parents and children on this topic. Therefore, we devoted the next set of questions to the possibilities of introducing media literacy in preschool institutions.

Thus, more than half of employees in preschool institutions (52.6%) agree that they should work with children on the subject of media literacy. If we add those who fully agree with it, we get that **a total of 72.6% of employees in preschool institutions believe that children should be taught on the topic of media literacy**. A total of 18.6% of respondents have the opposite opinion, and 8.8% of them cannot assess.

Graph 16. Do you agree that it is necessary to work with children on the topic of media literacy already in preschool institutions?, in %



In accordance with the above, a **total of 37% of respondents believe that the education system in Serbia currently does not pay enough attention to the media literacy of children of preschool age, and 44.2% of them believe that it only pays some attention.** Only 2.8% of respondents say that the educational system pays a lot of attention to the media literacy of preschool children, which is at the level of a statistical error; 16% cannot estimate – Graph 17.

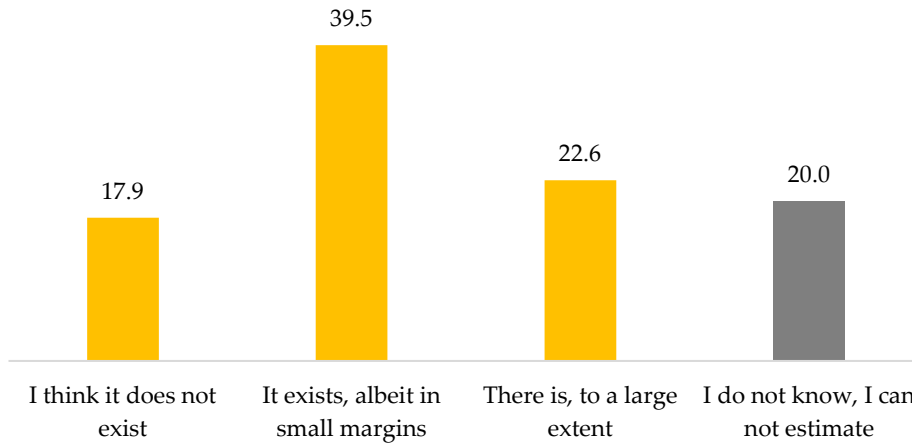
Graph 17. Do you believe that the education system in Serbia currently pays enough attention to the media literacy of children in preschool age? in %



The assessment by persons who work with preschool children on **the need to improve the education of children in terms of digital security through preschool institutions** is very important – this is what 62.1% of respondents collectively told us (of which 39.5% believe that this space not so big, and 22.6% that there is a lot of room for improvement). 17.9% of respondents believe that there is no room for improving children’s education in terms of digital security through preschool institutions, and every fifth cannot assess – Graph 18.

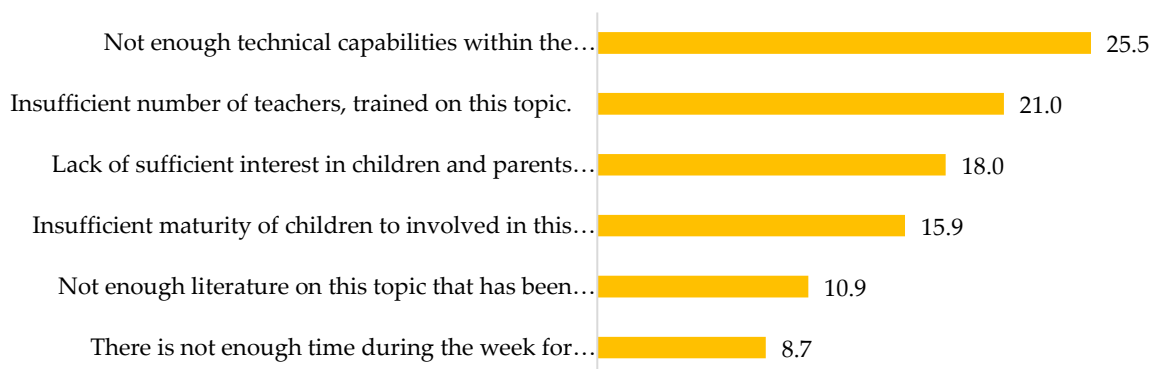
Observed according to the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents, statistical significance was observed only with regard to the position within the institution – *principals of preschool institutions are more inclined to answer that there is plenty of room, and educators that there is room but to a small extent.*

Graph 18. Based on your experience, do you think there is room for improving children’s education regarding digital security through preschool institutions?, in %



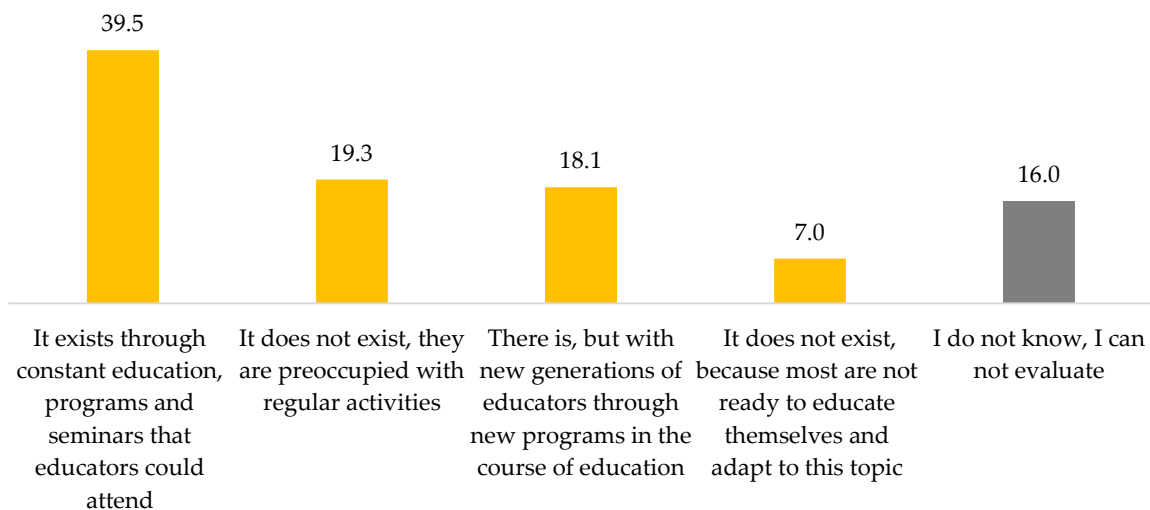
Graph 19 shows the distribution of responses regarding major obstacles to the improvement of children’s education regarding digital literacy in preschool institutions, according to the opinion of employees in these institutions. Respondents had the opportunity to choose a maximum of two answers that they believe represent the greatest obstacle. **Insufficient technical possibilities within the institution that would allow children to deal with this topic was recognised as one of the basic problems that prevent the improvement of children’s education in terms of digital literacy in preschool institutions** – every fourth respondent (25.5%) stated this as one of their two answers. In addition to problems of a technical nature, **employees also cited a lack of teaching staff who would adequately deal with this topic (21%), as well as the insufficient interest of parents and children in this topic (18%).**

Graph 19. What, in your opinion, are the main obstacles to the improvement of children’s education in terms of digital literacy in preschool institutions?, in %



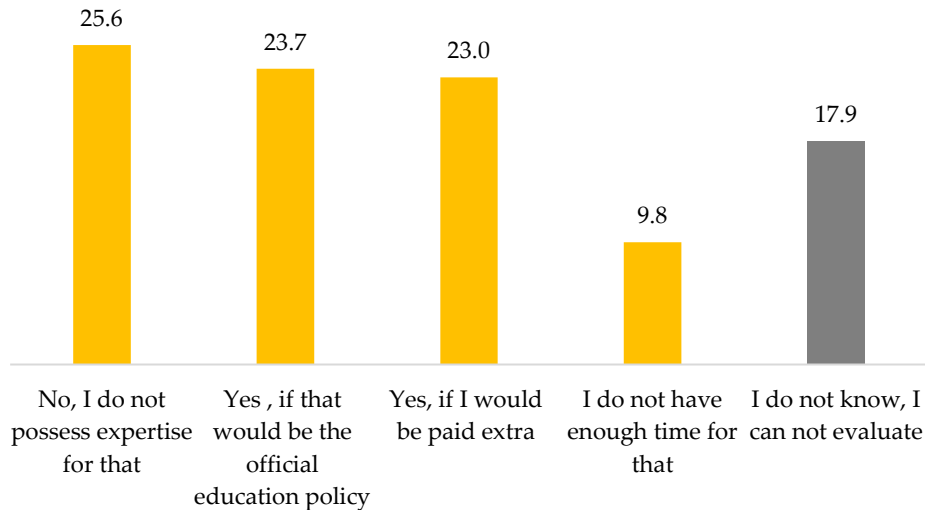
On the other hand, *the maturity of children to get involved in this topic, the lack of literature that would be adapted to children and their age, as well as insufficient time during the working week for a new topic, are not high on the list of problems that are an obstacle to the improvement of children's education on the subject of digital literacy* in preschool institutions. Again, in terms of the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents and the answers they give to this question, no significant differences can be distinguished, except in terms of the problem related to the technical possibilities within the institution that would enable dealing with the topic of media literacy. Specifically, none of the respondents in the position of a principal mentioned this as a problem, it was predominantly teachers and other employees who did.

Graph 20. Do you think there is room for improving educators' knowledge on media literacy of children, in %



Almost three-fifths of the respondents (57.6%) agree with the idea that there is room for improving the education of educational staff on children's media literacy – 39.5% of them find room in *constant education, programmes and seminars for employees*, and 18.1% believe that this room should be sought among new generations of pedagogues through new programmes during education – Graph 20. In contrast to this group of respondents, there are those who see it as a room for the improvement of educational staff – making a total of 26.3% of respondents, of which 19.3% find the reason in lack of time, and 7% in the unwillingness of the majority to educate themselves and adapt to this topic. Finally, 16% of them cannot decide.

Graph 21. Would you personally, or your preschool institution, be ready to take part in the process of educating preschoolers about media literacy?, in %



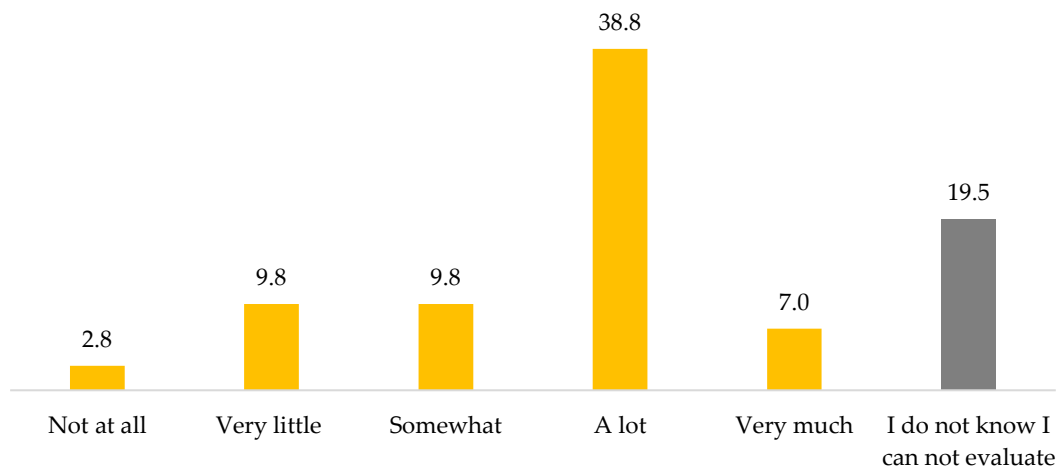
Almost half of the respondents (46.7%) are ready to take part in the process of educating children on media literacy – of which 23.7% are ready if it is the official education policy of Serbia, and 23% if they would be paid extra for it. On the other hand, every fourth respondent still believes that they are not skilled enough for it (25.6%), and another 9.8% of them do not find time for it, which is a total of 35.4% of those who are not ready to participate in the process of education of preschoolers on media literacy.

Regarding the readiness of employees in preschool institutions to take part in the process of educating children on media literacy after the workshop “Open media literacy of preschoolers”, which was held in Belgrade and Novi Sad, the attendees still stated that they would use publications that they received during the conference for the purpose of educating preschoolers about media literacy – 81.5% of the participants would use the material, and 18.5% admit that they would not. Among those who say they would not use it, the following reasons are given: “it doesn’t mean anything to me”, lack of time, they did not attend the workshop.

3 PARTICIPANTS' RECOMMENDATIONS

Bearing in mind that a total of **45.8% of respondents stated that the introduction of a special programme aimed at introducing them to media literacy would contribute a lot or very much to the education of preschoolers**, and another 22.1% stated that the introduction of a special programme would moderately contribute, which in conclusion indicates that *67.9% of respondents are more or less optimistic in this regard*. The opposite opinion is held by 12.6% of respondents, who do not believe that the introduction of a special programme aimed at introducing them to media literacy would contribute to the education of preschoolers, and one in five cannot assess.

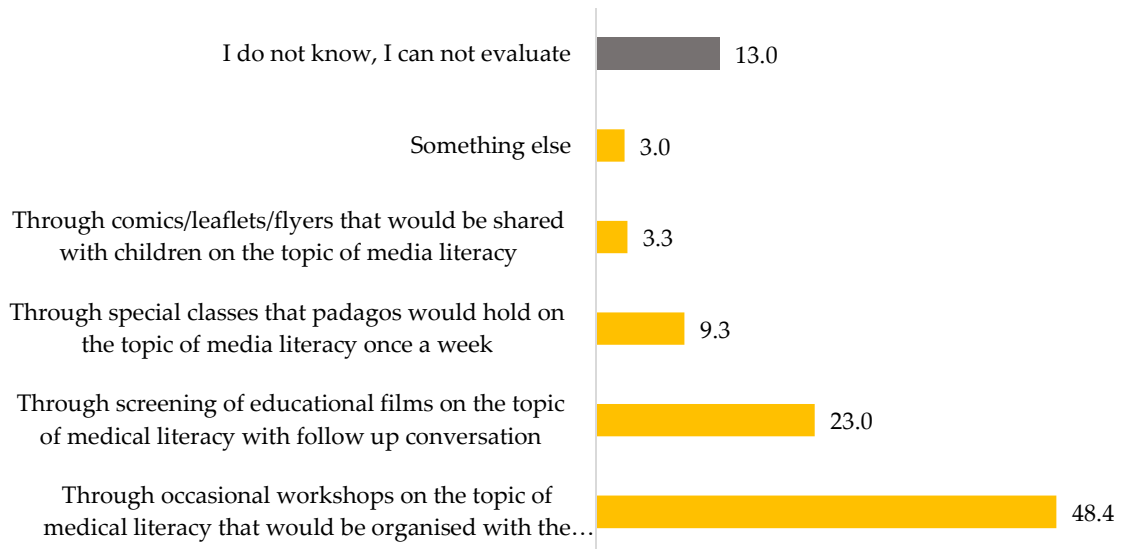
Graph 22. To what extent would the introduction of a special programme aimed at introducing them to media literacy would contribute to the education of preschool children, in %



The opinion about the ways to present media literacy to preschool children is extremely important. The employees of preschool institutions were asked how it would be best to introduce media literacy in preschool institutions – Graph 23.

Almost every second employee (48.4%) in preschool institutions believes that occasional workshops on the topic of media literacy that would be organised with the help of visiting experts are one of the best solutions to introduce media literacy in preschool institutions. Also, **the share of those who believe that showing educational films on the subject of media literacy with a discussion about it is one of the effective ways is also not negligible – 23%.** On the other hand, special classes that pedagogues would hold on the subject of media literacy once a week did not get much support – only every eleventh employee agrees with this idea as the best. In addition, comics, leaflets and flyers that would be distributed to children on the topic of media literacy are not recognised as a good way to introduce media literacy in preschool institutions.

Graph 23. In your pedagogical experience, how it would be best to introduce media literacy in preschool institutions?, in %



The share of respondents who could not assess the best way to introduce media literacy in preschool institutions is 13%, and only 3% stated something else as their answer. Among these answers were: educational shows with animators; group games within the project, for example, "How messages travel"; cooperation with the local environment, such as a visit to one of the newsrooms/television companies; joint workshops and parent education.

4 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Although employees in preschool institutions say that they are well informed about events in Serbia, they **do not believe that the media provide a complete insight into the events around us and that they encourage critical thinking**, which results in a high degree of distrust in the media in Serbia. **About 15% of the respondents say that they do not use social networks** and these are primarily older respondents, while among those who use social networks, **the most common use is YouTube** (72.7% use this network often or very often), **Facebook** (62.1%) and **Instagram** (41.2%).

Over two-fifths of respondents (42.1%) working with preschool children know that media literacy implies the ability to critically analyse the content presented in the media and determine its accuracy or credibility. Nevertheless, this finding that more than half of the respondents do not actually know exactly what media literacy entails is a clear indicator that there is room for educating employees in preschool institutions. It turns out that it is **most important for respondents to check the bigger picture and the context behind the information.** *A large part of employees in preschool institutions, according to their own words, practise actions that help media literacy* (on average, every ninth respondent never checks the source behind media content, does not consult other sources, does not check the broader picture and context), **but there is room for improvement before all in the frequency of checks of information and content that reach them** – practices that imply media literacy should be more frequent. **Every second employee in a preschool institution (51.9%) says that, regardless of professional experience, it would be useful for them to strengthen their critical thinking towards media content.**

According to the assessment of employees in preschool institutions, **more than half of preschool children have access to the internet** (32.6% of employees say that more than half of children have access to the internet), and **29.3% of employees say that almost all of their preschool children use the internet.** Also, almost **every fourth employee (24%) thinks that all children they work with have access to television and video platforms.** On the other hand, those who work with children in the preschool education system believe that the situation is different with regard to social networks. The largest number of respondents (25.3%) believe that only **a small number of children have access to social networks from their account or their parents' account**, namely YouTube and Tik Tok, while Instagram and Facebook are networks that are not popular among preschoolers.

The importance of children's preparedness for using social networks is particularly indicated by the fact that a total of **even 69.7% of respondents believe that the influence of social networks on preschoolers is harmful or very harmful**, especially since those who work with children in the largest number estimate (37.7%) that children probably have access to television or online video platforms **without parental supervision and outside of scheduled times.** **The dominant majority of (73.7%) respondents believe that there is more or less**

room for improving children's readiness to use social networks. However, in terms of exposure to content that is not appropriate for their age, **the largest number of those who work with preschoolers cannot assess whether preschoolers are exposed to content that is inappropriate for their age** (41.9%). Among those who believe that they have an insight into the content that preschoolers are exposed to, **the most common answer is that more than half of children are exposed to audio-visual content that is not appropriate for their age** (21.9%). In accordance with the previous answers, it is not surprising that a total of 44.4% of employees in preschool institutions believe that **parents pay very little or little attention to children's media education, digital security and their behaviour on social networks.**

Based on our findings, ***the possibilities of introducing media literacy in preschool institutions are great.*** **65.8% of respondents say that they have not dealt with the issue of media literacy in their preschool until now** and those who work with children (a total of 72.6%) **agree that they should work with children on the topic of media literacy.** Assessment of persons who work with preschool children that **there is room to improve the education of children in terms of digital security through preschool institutions** is very important – this is what 62.1% of respondents collectively told us (of which 39.5% believe that this space not so big, and 22.6% that there is a lot of room for improvement). *Principals of preschool institutions are more inclined to answer that there is plenty of room, and educators that there is room but to a small extent.*

Insufficient technical possibilities within the institution that would allow children to deal with this topic was recognised as one of the basic problems that prevent the improvement of children's education in terms of digital literacy in preschool institutions – every fourth respondent (25.5%) stated this as one of their two answers. In addition to problems of a technical nature, **employees also cited a lack of teaching staff who would adequately deal with this topic** (21%), **as well as the insufficient interest of parents and children in this topic** (18%).

Almost three-fifths of the respondents (57.6%) agree with the idea that there is room for improving the education of educational staff on children's media literacy – 39.5% of them find room in *constant education, programmes and seminars for employees*, and 18.1% believe that this room should be sought among new generations of pedagogues through new programmes during education. Among those who do not share this attitude, the reasons are primarily the lack of time, and in a small number of cases, the unwillingness of the majority to educate themselves and adapt to this topic. **Almost half of the respondents (46.7%) are ready to take part in the process of educating preschoolers about media literacy** – of which 23.7% are ready if it is the official educational policy of Serbia, and 23% if they would be paid extra for it. What is more, almost every second employee (48.4%) in preschool institutions believes that **occasional workshops on the topic of media literacy that would be organised with the help of visiting experts is one of the best solutions** to introduce media literacy in preschool institutions. Also, **the share of those who believe that showing**

educational films on the subject of media literacy with discussion about it is one of the effective ways is also not negligible (23%).

Growing up in the digital age does not necessarily mean that individuals possess the skills for equal and complex civic participation in the 21st century. Therefore, we should work to develop these skills, especially in terms of media literacy, even in children at the youngest age.

Based on the presented research, it is possible to list the following recommendations for the introduction of media literacy programmes in preschool institutions:

- *Employees in preschool institutions should be additionally trained on the very concept of media literacy – through brochures, seminars, trainings, professional associates, etc.;*
- *It is necessary to work in parallel with parents, educators and preschoolers, and encourage communication between these stakeholders in all directions, as well as interest in this topic;*
- *Introduce the teaching unit of media literacy as mandatory in the curriculum for preschool education – the official education policy of Serbia is shown to be the biggest motivator (besides monetary benefits) for employees in preschool institutions;*
- *Encourage the educational staff to get a better insight (through additional conversations with the children) into the frequency and manner of use of digital technology by preschoolers, as well as into the content that the children access – in this way, the educational staff will have a better insight into the needs of preschoolers and the direction in which to talk about media literacy, and more knowledge and information will enable better communication and cooperation with parents;*
- *It is desirable to work to improve technical possibilities within the institution that would enable children to deal with this topic;*
- *It is desirable to occasionally organise (joint) workshops for parents and educators on the topic of media literacy, which would include guest experts;*
- *It is desirable to occasionally organise the screening of educational films on the topic of media literacy with a mandatory discussion after the film, after which both parents and employees would take with them a strong impression of the importance of developing media literacy skills in children.*

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union and the Council of Europe, through the joint programme "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye". It was developed with the support of the joint action "Freedom of expression and freedom of the media in Serbia (JUFREX)" (2019–2022) and it was published within the joint action "Protecting freedom of expression and of the media in Serbia (PRO-FREX)" (2023-2026). Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors. Views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union or the Council of Europe.

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The action "Protecting freedom of expression and of the media in Serbia (PROFREX)", implemented under the Horizontal Facility III, enables the beneficiary institutions and civil society organisations in Serbia to progress towards meeting their reform agendas in the field of freedom of expression and freedom of media, in line with the European standards. It aims at contributing to an improved environment for the exercise, in particular by journalists and media actors, of their rights of freedom of expression, in a more pluralistic and safer media environment, in line with the standards as set by in accordance with Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights.

** This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence*

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