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Draft study on media and information literacy in the digital environment

A. Short outline

1. The role of media and information literacy

Media and information literacy lies at the core of freedom of expression and information because it empowers citizens to develop the cognitive, technical and social skills and capacities that enable them to effectively access and critically analyse information and media content; to make informed decisions about which media they use and how to use them; to understand the ethical implications of media and technology, and to communicate effectively, including by creating content.

Media and information literacy is a transversal issue addressed in various contexts by different bodies and departments of the Council of Europe. In terms of enhancing media pluralism, guidelines were included on provision and promotion of media literacy in the Draft Recommendation on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership (to be adopted next month). These guidelines are aimed at (i) developing of the citizens' ability to access, understand and use information and ideas propagated by the media, and (ii) enabling them to make an informed and critical evaluation of those ideas based on the awareness of many different influences impacting the production and dissemination of media content.

For that purpose, the Draft recommendation recommends the member states to:

- adopt/develop appropriate legislative provisions;

- adopt coordinated national media literacy policy and implement it through multi annual plans involving a wide range of stakeholders;

- include media literacy in school curricula at all levels and in lifelong learning cycles;

- encourage media to promote media literacy through their policies, strategies and activities;

- ensure that national regulatory authorities have the scope and resources for the promotion of media literacy.

2. Purpose and objectives of the study

Given that media and information literacy guidelines are included in a number of existing Council of Europe instruments, it may be appropriate to continue with this approach and focus on issues that will inform the development of policies and strategies in the areas within the remit of the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society, specifically those that will:

- give impetus to the process of implementation of the Draft Recommendation on media pluralism and transparency of ownership;

- inform the conception of media literacy guidelines for the future Recommendation on promoting a favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age, and

- identify the possible need for further research and/or policymaking.

In this light, the study on media and information literacy in the digital environment (the title may be further refined in accordance with the study's specific goals) should serve as a context setting piece providing insight into the receiver side of the media and information market. It should contribute to the understanding of how individuals perceive (access, recognise, understand) media content, processes by which such content is generated and disseminated, roles of different players in these processes, etc. It should further explore how to best highlight the benefits of quality journalism to various audiences.

Some of the questions addressed in the study might include:

- how easy/difficult it is for citizens/users to recognise different types of digital media content (facts, opinions, editorial content, sponsored content, user-generated content, etc.) and if/how they recognise bias in the content;

- how well citizens/users understand how internet intermediaries work and the processes of production and dissemination of content they consume through digital platforms;

- whether citizens/users are aware of the extent of mis-, dis- and malinformation in media content;

- whether citizens/users recognise and value quality journalism, and how to highlight its benefits to them;

- what media companies/digital platforms can do to advance media and information literacy;

- highlighting a few successful media and information literacy models from national levels that address specific audiences (children, youth, adults).

B. Relevant documents

- Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)x (provisional version as of 7th December 2017) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on "Media Pluralism and Transparency of Media Ownership";
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)6 and explanatory memorandum of the Committee of Ministers to member States on a "Guide to Human Rights for Internet Users";
- Wardle Cl. and Derakhshan H., Council of Europe report DGI(2017)09, "*Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making*", p.p. 68-70 & p.p. 80-85, Council of Europe, Strasbourg;
- Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28, European Audiovisual Observatory, Strasbourg 2016;
- "Media Literacy", IRIS plus 2011-3, European Audiovisual Observatory, Strasbourg, 2011;
- Council of the European Union, Council's conclusions on "Developing media literacy and critical thinking through education and training", Brussels, 30 May 2016
- Media and Information Literacy Policy and Strategy Guidelines, UNESCO, 2013
- Digital Citizenship Education, Volumes I and II, Council of Europe, 2017
- White A. (2016), "*Towards a Programme for Journalism and Media Literacy*", Ethical Journalism Network