

Council conclusions of 27 November 2009 on media literacy in the digital environment

(2009/C 301/09)

THE COUNCIL,

REAFFIRMS the policy approach to this issue set out in its conclusions on a European approach to media literacy in the digital environment of 21 and 22 May 2008 ⁽¹⁾,

WELCOMES the Commission Recommendation of 20 August 2009 on media literacy in the digital environment for a more competitive audiovisual and content industry and an inclusive knowledge society, and in particular:

- the focus put on the active involvement of the industry, including all types of media, in the promotion of media literacy initiatives,
- the recognition of the role that the education system can play to promote media literacy — the ability to access media and to understand, critically evaluate, create and communicate media content — in the context of Member States' lifelong learning strategies,
- the Commission's intentions to encourage greater consensus on media literacy, to support the analysis and exchange of good practices between Member States and to develop tools intended to help Member States and the Commission measure levels of media literacy across Europe,

STRESSES THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- In the promotion of media literacy, it is crucial to recognise that the digital revolution has brought about significant benefits and opportunities, enriching the lives of individuals, in terms of their ability to communicate, learn and create, and transforming the organisation of society and the economy. The responsible and informed use of new technologies and new media requires citizens to be aware of risks and to respect relevant legal provisions, but media literacy policies should address such questions in the context of a generally positive message.
- While it is indeed true that the media industry has a crucial role in work to promote media literacy, it is important to underline the independence of the media and the fact that Member States have differing approaches in promoting the development of good practices and standards in the media industry, where self-regulation or co-regulation are two among several possible solutions. It is also important to take into account the many initiatives in the area of media literacy already being carried out by the media industry as well as by cultural institutions, non-governmental organisations and by the voluntary sector, and to further promote these initiatives.

— In the promotion of media literacy, particular attention should be paid to the fact that different groups in society may have different needs and behaviors, as well as differing possibilities to access media. For example, children and young people often have a natural readiness to use new media and to exploit new technologies, whilst adults may have greater accumulated experience that can benefit critical thinking about media content. Strategies for improving media literacy must take all such differences fully into account and promote communication between different groups and interests in society. At the same time strategies for making technologies widely available and accessible to citizens should continue to be stressed and reinforced by Member States.

— The education system, including formal, informal and non-formal learning, can play an important role in developing and improving media literacy, as well as creativity and the potential for innovation, among all people in society, and notably children and young people who themselves can play an important role in passing on these skills to their families. In the context of education policy, it is recalled that the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning includes inter alia references to 'digital competence' and 'cultural awareness and expression' as two key competences. Member States developing media literacy in an educational context should do so with due regard to the reference framework established by the 2006 Recommendation. Furthermore, the Lifelong Learning Programme could be one possible source of support for the promotion of media literacy.

— Although it is true that media literacy is a dynamic and evolving concept and that common understanding of the concept is affected by cultural, technological, industrial and generational differences, it is also clear that, with the development of a global internet as a key part of the communications infrastructure, the citizens of Europe and of the rest of the world are increasingly facing and living in a media landscape with similar features. This should make it possible and meaningful to progressively develop criteria to assess the levels of media literacy in Member States as implied by Article 26 of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, while also taking into account that such criteria and assessments need to reflect the different preconditions in Member States. The Member States and the Commission are encouraged to cooperate fully in this task,

INVITES THE COMMISSION AND THE MEMBER STATES, within the limits of their respective competences, to take due note of these conclusions, in addition to those of 21 and 22 May 2008, in the development of their policies on media literacy.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 140, 6.6.2008, p. 8.