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COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

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on media literacy in the digital environment for a more competitive audiovisual and content industry and an inclusive knowledge society

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THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, in particular Article 211 thereof¹,

Whereas:

- (1) On 20.12.2007 the Commission adopted a Communication "A European approach to medial literacy in the digital environment"² focussing on media literacy for commercial communication covering issues related to advertising, media literacy for audiovisual works which is in part about raising awareness of European film and enhancing creativity skills and media literacy for online which, for example would give citizens a better knowledge of how Internet search engines work.
- (2) The European Parliament, in its report on media literacy in a digital world³, urged the Commission to expand its policy to promote media literacy, working together with all European Institutions and with local and regional authorities.
- (3) Council conclusions on Media Literacy⁴ adopted by the Education, Youth and Culture Council of 21/22 May 2008 endorse the strategic view proposed by the European Commission of media literacy as an important factor for active citizenship in today's information society.
- (4) A global opinion on Creative Content on line and Media literacy was adopted by the Committee of Regions in October 2008⁵.
- (5) The Lisbon Council⁶ concluded that "content industries create added value by exploiting and networking European cultural diversity". The European Agenda for Culture launched in 2007 establishes a strategic policy framework to address key challenges in the area of culture, while the Council conclusions of May 2009 on culture as a catalyst for creativity and innovation, highlight the specific contribution culture can make to creativity and innovation and call for a broad concept of

¹ OJ C325/1 – 24/12/2002

² COM(2007)833final.

³ 2008/2129(INI), 24.11.2008.

⁴ 2008/C 140/08

⁵ CdR 94/2008

⁶ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A6-2005-0278&language=EN>

innovation as part of the Lisbon strategy beyond 2010. This is also particularly important in the framework of the European Commission's initiative i2010 in order to boost competitiveness in the ICT sector and create a Single European information space..

- (6) A higher degree of media literacy would significantly help to approaching the objectives set for the European Union at the Lisbon European Council and in the i2010 initiative in particular regarding a more competitive knowledge economy, while contributing to a more inclusive information society.
- (7) The public consultation held at the end of 2006 showed that there are different practices and uneven levels of media literacy throughout Europe. At the same time, it is recognised that there are no agreed criteria or standards for assessing media literacy, and there is an urgent need for larger-scale, longer-term research to establish such criteria.
- (8) As recognised in the study "Current trends and approaches to media literacy in Europe" carried out for the Commission in the second half of 2007 there are some barriers to development in the area of media literacy at European level. These include in particular lack of shared vision, lack of European visibility of national, regional and local initiatives, lack of European networks and of co-ordination between stakeholders.
- (9) It would be extremely important to be able to analyse, highlight and spread good practices in the field throughout the European Union and to create and foster European networks among stakeholders.
- (10) The ability of European citizens to make informed and diversified choices as media consumers would contribute to the competitiveness of the European audiovisual and content industry.
- (11) Media literacy relates to the ability to access the media, to understand and critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media content and to create communications in a variety of contexts.
- (12) The diffusion of digital creative content and the multiplication of online and mobile distribution platforms create new challenges for media literacy. In today's world, citizens need to develop analytical skills that allow for better intellectual and emotional understanding of digital media.
- (13) Media literacy includes all media. The aim of media literacy is to increase people's awareness of the many forms of media messages encountered in their everyday lives. Media messages are the programmes, films, images, texts, sounds and websites that are carried by different forms of communication.
- (14) Media literacy plays an important role in enhancing awareness in the European audiovisual heritage and cultural identities and increasing knowledge and interest in audiovisual heritage and recent European cultural works.
- (15) Media literacy is a matter of inclusion and citizenship in today's information society. It is a fundamental skill not only for young people but also for adults and elderly people, parents, teachers and media professionals. Thanks to the internet and digital

technology, an increasing number of Europeans can now create and disseminate images, information and content. Media literacy is today regarded as one of the key pre-requisites for an active and full citizenship in order to prevent and diminish risks of exclusion from community life.

- (16) A media literate society would be at the same time a stimulus and a pre-condition for pluralism and independence in the media. The expression of diverse opinions and ideas, in different languages, representing different groups, in and across societies has a positive impact on the values of diversity, tolerance, transparency, equity and dialogue. The development of media literacy in all sections of society should therefore be promoted and its progress followed closely.
- (17) Democracy depends on the active participation of citizens to the life of their community and media literacy would provide the skills they need to make sense of the daily flow of information disseminated through new communication technologies.
- (18) Media literacy should be addressed in different ways at different levels. The modalities of inclusion of media literacy in school curricula at all levels are the Member States' primary responsibility. The role played by local authorities is also very important since they are close to the citizens and support initiatives in the non-formal education sector. Civil society should also make an active contribution to promoting media literacy in a bottom-up manner.
- (19) Commission initiatives such as MEDIA 2007 (Decision 1718/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 concerning the implementation of a programme of support for the European audiovisual sector⁷) and the Audio Visual Media Service Directive (Directive 2007/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2007 amending Council Directive 89/552/EEC on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the pursuit of television broadcasting activities⁸) which aim at reinforcing the competitiveness of European audiovisual and content industry, would contribute to media literacy.
- (20) The Commission intends to monitor the efforts made on audiovisual media literacy and media literacy for commercial communication as foreseen in recital 37 of the Audio Visual Media Service Directive, notably in the framework of the Audio Visual Media Service Contact Committee and within the reporting obligation foreseen in Article 26 of the Directive.
- (21) The Commission will encourage research projects on media literacy in the framework of existing programmes. In particular, it intends to launch a study on the level of awareness of risks connected to the dissemination of personal data in the online environment, and a study on how to improve the use of search engines
- (22) Media literacy initiatives should also include a dimension of awareness of the role of copyright

⁷ OJ L 327, 24.11.2006, p. 12

⁸ 2007/65/EC - OJ L 332, 18.12.2007

- (23) Processing of personal data in information and communication networks, notably for the purpose of providing tailored offers to consumers, and the challenges it raises in terms of protection of personal data and respect of privacy must be addressed as part of media literacy initiatives. Indeed, information and communication networks open new possibilities for users; however it might also pose new risks for individuals, such as identity theft, discriminatory profiling or continuous surveillance. The Commission addressed these concerns and possible solutions in its Communication on Promoting Data Protection by Privacy Enhancing Technologies (PETs)⁹.
- (24) Initiatives on digital media literacy should ensure a close involvement of traditional publishers, considering the highly valuable experience of the publishing industry as regards media literacy in the offline world and given the increasing shift of this industry towards digital content production and distribution.
- (25) The Commission intends to further create consensus on essential aspects of media literacy (definitions, objectives) and support the analysis and exchange of good practices on media literacy in the digital environment, including on the economy of the media sector in Europe in particular through the organisation of meetings of the AVMS Contact Committee¹⁰, the promotion and support of events under MEDIA 2007¹¹, cooperation with the other European Institutions and International Organisations such as the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the United Nations Alliance of Civilization and the promotion of a public private partnership on media literacy.

HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT:

- I The Member States, in cooperation with the authorities in charge of audiovisual and electronic communication regulation and in collaboration with supervisory data protection authorities where appropriate:
1. develop and implement co-regulatory initiatives leading to the adoption of codes of conduct by the main stakeholders and promote self-regulatory initiatives and guidelines, on the subjects identified for the Media Industry under part II below;
 2. following on from the current Commission's study on assessment criteria for media literacy levels in Europe, promote systematic research through studies and projects on the different aspects and dimensions of media literacy in the digital environment and monitor and measure the progress of media literacy levels;
 3. open a debate in conferences and other public events on the inclusion of media literacy in the compulsory education curriculum, and as part of the provision of key competences for lifelong learning, set out in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning;

⁹ COM (2007) 228 final, 2.5.2007

¹⁰ AVMS, see 2007/65/EC.

¹¹ Decision No 1718/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 concerning the implementation of a programme of support for the European audiovisual sector (MEDIA 2007)

4. enhance their efforts to improve awareness of national and European audiovisual heritage through national awareness-raising campaigns aimed at citizens;
 5. raise awareness through trainings, information days and distribution of information packs of the risks involved in processing personal data through information and communication networks and educate users, especially young people, parents and teachers, in this field.
- II The Media Industry increases its commitment to provide with the necessary tools to improve their level of media literacy by:
1. systematically spreading knowledge through information campaigns on how information and creative content are produced, edited and distributed in the digital world, including on how search engines work and how to better use them;
 2. providing citizens with clear, user-friendly information, by organising awareness-raising campaigns, about techniques used for commercial communication purpose, notably about product placement, online advertising, and with means to better identify the boundaries between marketing and content;
 3. providing citizens with information, creating information packs especially aimed at young people, on how their personal data are processed in the context of tailored offers, notably interactive advertising, in the full respect of existing legal provisions;
 4. actively informing citizens by organising information days, of how the creative economy works, including the role of copyright in that respect.

This Recommendation is addressed to the Member States.

Done at Brussels, 20.8.2009.

For the Commission
Viviane REDING
Member of the Commission

