



SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND  
PUBLIC RELATIONS

# HANDBOOK

ON MEDIA LITERACY



for youth  
media  
and civil society organizations

This publication is part of the project:  
Media Literacy in an Age of News Overabundance:  
Media and Information Literacy Coalition





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# Handbook on media literacy for youth, media and civil society organizations

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SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND  
PUBLIC RELATIONS

Skopje, 2018



ВИСОКА ШКОЛА ЗА НОВИНАРСТВО  
И ЗА ОДНОСИ СО ЈАВНОСТА



## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

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# Content



● BACKGROUND.....	6
● <b>I</b> WHAT IS MEDIA LITERACY?.....	8
● <b>II</b> THE YOUTH AND THE MEDIA.....	20
● <b>III</b> MEDIA AND THE MEDIA LITERACY.....	30
● <b>IV</b> CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND MEDIA LITERACY .....	36





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**BACKGROUND**

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## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

*“The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking”<sup>1</sup>*

Albert Einstein

If you thought the world is recently changing too fast, wait to see what is going to happen in the next few decades. The Research<sup>2</sup> published by DELL Technologies in July 2017 shows that 85% of jobs that will exist in the year of 2030 have not been invented yet.

“The pace of change will be so rapid that people will learn ‘in the moment’ using new technologies such as augmented reality and virtual reality. The ability to gain new knowledge will be more valuable than the knowledge itself,” says in the statement of DELL Technologies<sup>3</sup>.

In such new world, the qualifications and knowledge will be relevant, but not sufficiently. The critical thinking, the media literacy and the digital literacy will not be advantages but rather disadvantages for those do not having them. Even today, if a person wants to participate successfully in the public life, including the business, policy and social activities, that individual needs to be media literate. A media literate population is a population that is informed, engaged and responsible in the use of the media, both as consumer but also as creator<sup>4</sup>.

The purpose of this Manual is to instigate the pupils, students, teachers and professors, the civil activists and the media to think critically about the world that surrounds us, to help them navigate more easily through the sea of information but also to teach them how to create media content more efficiently and more responsibly and to use the media as prerequisite for active citizenship.

The Manual starts from the basics. It explains what is media literacy and what are its key components. In a number of chapters it speaks out to different target groups, to young people, media and civil sector trying to explain to all of them why it is important to be media literate and what is the role of all of us in making our citizens literate.

“The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read<sup>5</sup>,” said Mark Twain. We are to read and write, to analyze and evaluate the media information we consume on daily basis and not to allow to be manipulated.

1 <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/1799-the-world-as-we-have-created-it-is-a-process>

2 [https://www.delltechnologies.com/content/dam/delltechnologies/assets/perspectives/2030/pdf/SR1940\\_IFTFforDellTechnologies\\_Human-Machine\\_070517\\_readerhigh-res.pdf](https://www.delltechnologies.com/content/dam/delltechnologies/assets/perspectives/2030/pdf/SR1940_IFTFforDellTechnologies_Human-Machine_070517_readerhigh-res.pdf)

3 [https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2017/07/14/85-of-jobs-that-will-exist-in-2030-haven-t-been-invented-yet-d\\_a\\_23030098/](https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2017/07/14/85-of-jobs-that-will-exist-in-2030-haven-t-been-invented-yet-d_a_23030098/)

4 <http://mediacoacheurope.eu/>

5 <http://quodid.com/quotes/52/mark-twain/the-man-who-does-not-read-has-no>



# WHAT IS MEDIA LITERACY?



## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

**N**ever before in history have the humans been more dependent from, and in interaction with, the media. Except during our sleep, there is almost no part of the day when we do not have interaction with some medium, may it be TV, newspaper, music, social media, email, book or, for example, a billboard that just accidentally happened to be there when we are crossing the street.

Today, more than ever, it is important for us to understand the way in which the media work, how they influence our lives and everything that surrounds us. We also need to learn how to correctly use the media content and how can we create such media content in more efficient manner.

What is media literacy and what it means to be media literate? A media literacy is a concept based on the traditional literacy but it also provides new forms of reading and writing i.e. comprehension and creation of the media content.

The definition we shall be using for this Manual is the one of the American National Association for Media Literacy Education.<sup>6</sup>

**Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media content in various forms and to ultimately act or use that content.**<sup>7</sup>

It is inevitable and necessary response to the complex digital reality that evolves with huge speed and to the wealth of information we are facing every day.

Today, the information, the entertaining and educational content contain complex combination of words, images, videos and sounds that require from us relevant skills that should help us properly **understand, evaluate and use** that content, but in the same time to **create** and distribute our own messages.

In order to be media literate, the most important thing is to develop the critical thinking as a prerequisite for making correct decisions in all areas of life.

### » ACCESS

If you have downloaded this manual from the website [www.medium.edu.mk](http://www.medium.edu.mk) it means you have Internet access, computer, table or smartphone, and you know how to access and download a document from the Internet.

According to the research of the Institute for Communication Studies and M-Prospect<sup>8</sup>, 73,6% of the respondents said they are using Internet at home or at work/ educational institution, while 27,4% are not using Internet, which means that almost two thirds of the Macedonian citizens have Internet access. We are continuously connected to the Internet via our mobile phones and home devices and we consider the access to any type of media content as common thing. However, there are places and people that do not have such opportunity.

Eritrea is the country with least Internet penetration, where only 0,91% of the people have Internet. This country is also known at North Korea of Africa when it comes to isolation of the citizens and the bad human rights situation. East Timor, an island North of Aus-

<sup>6</sup> National Association for Media Literacy Education <https://namle.net/about-namle/contact/>

<sup>8</sup> More details about the research published on 14 September 2018 is available at [www.stopdezinformacii.mk](http://www.stopdezinformacii.mk).

Check out the text titled: "We are insufficiently verifying the news we read in the social media"

## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

ustralia has only 1% Internet penetration and is the second worst connected country in the world. These are followed by Myanmar (1,16%), Burundi (1,39%) and Sierra Leone (1,49%). Eight out of ten worst connected countries are in Africa. In these countries, not even two persons, out of one hundred persons, have Internet access and the Internet is a privilege of small percentage of rich people in those countries, and more for men than for women<sup>9</sup>.



The Internet Live Stats website<sup>10</sup> shows how many Internet users are out there in the world at any moment. In the time of writing of this Manual this number was 4.079.876.080. According to official statistics, in 2017 the number of Internet users in the world was a bit more than 40% of the world population, which means 60% of the world population still does not have Internet.

In July 2016 the United Nations Council on Human Rights adopted a non-binding resolution that condemns the countries that intentionally disrupt the Internet access for the citizens<sup>11</sup>. The Resolution is based on previous UN Conclusions on digital rights, confirming the attitude of the Organization that the “rights the people have off-line must be also protected online”, especially the freedom of expression enshrined in Article 19<sup>12</sup> of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Although non-binding, this Resolution is very important and comes in a moment when many governments started to disconnect the Internet access, or to some parts of the Internet, under the excuse of security risks. These steps prevent or reduce the right of the citizens in these society to be freely and independently informed about the events in the country.

Unfortunately, even when we take the societies with high Internet penetration, not all citizens have same access to information and to all media content. The Internet, the modern devices such as computers, tablets, smartphones cost money and they are not so easily accessible to everyone.

It is normal to assume that already at the beginning of their development of education, the children that have permanent Internet access will have advantage over those that do not have. They will be able to easily develop the digital skills that will become decisive on the labor market in the world that is becoming technologically more advanced.

<sup>9</sup> <http://fortune.com/2015/10/06/worst-internet-access/>

<sup>10</sup> Internet Live Stats <http://www.internetlivesstats.com>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.theverge.com/2016/7/4/12092740/un-resolution-condemns-disrupting-internet-access>

<sup>12</sup> Article 19. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

### » ANALYSIS

If we have access and knowledge to access the desired media content, the next skill we need to develop is to analyze the media content we are in touch with.

The American professor Renee Hobbs<sup>13</sup> is asking the five basic question that a media literate person should always ask itself whenever is following some media content:

#### **1. Who created this message and why it was sent?**

Whenever we are following some media content it is important to know who is sending it and what is the intention. Is that an information or hidden propaganda? Is it a journalist story or own opinion and standpoint? Is it a movie created to entertain or has some hidden message? Sometimes the sender of the message and his/ her intentions are clear and sincere, but is not always the case. There are cases when the journalist will jump over the professional rules and ethical standards and, instead of relaying the information in objective manner, will try to impose his/ her standpoint to influence our opinion. In other cases we are not even aware that, instead of news about the event, we are effectively watching a hidden advertisement.

It is therefore necessary to focus first on why some media content has been created? Is it to entertain, to inform or to convince us in something? If we identify the reason why the message was created it will be much easier for use to understand its impact.

“All media are trying to sell us something. If not a product than it is some idea. If it is not an idea then they are selling certain values. If

it is not values that it is a concept of living<sup>14</sup>,” says Sophia Kintero in her book “Moonrising: The Power of Women Leading from the Heart”.

If we are good media detectors will be able to see what exactly they are trying to sell us and how to use that for own strategy for positive changes.

#### **2. What techniques have been used to attract my attention?**

The media are using different strategies to attract our attention and to get our attention about the message they are conveying. This is especially visible in the marketing industry where the advertising agencies are using various techniques to be more successful in their ultimate objective. There is almost no advertising block where a celebrity is not appearing to shave, put deodorant, flies with airplane or cooks. Recently there is a dominant presence of the largest football stars like Ronaldo, Messi, Grizman... The techniques used depend on the target audience and that determines whether we will be watching sporting stars, half-naked girls or cute pandas.

Have you noticed that the advertisements are louder compared to the rest of the TV content? Ask any TV station this question and you'll get the same answer, “the commercials are no louder than any of the other programming we broadcast – they just sound louder.” This is partially true and it is true they are not increasing the volume when the advertisements are starting, but we still have the impression they are louder than the rest of the content.

The TV broadcast is a combination of audio levels, both quiet and loud. Nothing must be quiet in the advertising industry. Everything is loud – the voices, the music, the sound effects<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Renee Hobbs is the founder of Media Education Lab and is well known scholar and researcher in the area of digital and media literacy. <https://mediaeducationlab.com/about/renee-hobbs>

<sup>14</sup> [https://books.google.mk/books/about/Moonrise.html?id=NIL4qaov9\\_cC&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.mk/books/about/Moonrise.html?id=NIL4qaov9_cC&redir_esc=y)

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/17229281/ns/business-consumer\\_news/t/why-are-tv-commercials-louder-show/#.W\\_q64hNKiu4](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/17229281/ns/business-consumer_news/t/why-are-tv-commercials-louder-show/#.W_q64hNKiu4)

The American communicologist and writer, Spencer Critchley<sup>16</sup> explains this in the following way: “The loudest sound of the advertisement is not louder than the loudest sound of any part of the broadcast. However, the average volume in the advertisements is very high i.e. it is continuously loud and there are no quiet sections.”

Furthermore, in the informative broadcasts and shows we also encounter different techniques for attracting the attention, the manner of presenting the information, the text, video, photography – they all play very important role in that process. Can you recall of an interview in which the photo of the interlocutor speaks more than his/ her words? Interviews in which the editor decided photos showing the interlocutor as angry, happy or sad?

Sometimes the techniques the people that create and communicate the media content use are not ethical nor professional. Sometimes those techniques include manipulation, partial truths or lies, headlines that shockingly manipulate our emotions or headlines that are trying to convince us to click on the news and read it: “Shocking!” “Exclusive!”, “You won’t believe this!!!” Yes, we really cannot believe when we click on it – we cannot believe how naïve we were.

### **3. What views and values are introduced through the message?**

The media messages are attitudes, views and values transferred through the media<sup>17</sup>. The skill is to be able to correctly identify those values. When we are analyzing those messages it is important to understand there are no media that are free of specific values and attitudes, and there will never be. All media transfer specific subtle messages on who or what is important. The messages inevitably include the attitudes, opinions and values of those creating them. Taking a TV series, for example, the decision on the gender, age, opinions, religion and attitudes of the characters in that series, or the decision on the stage, place, time of the story – all include the attitudes and opinions of those creating that TV series. Even the news include integrated ideas and values in the selection of what is relevant, the selection of topics, which news will be aired first, the selection of the focus, the choice of photographs, etc.

We need to develop skills that will help us identify the values and ideas in the media content, in the news, the entertaining programs, on the Internet, especially when they are tacit and subtle. In that way we will be able to adopt correct and argued decisions which messages we will accept and which ones we will reject.

<sup>16</sup> Spencer Critchley is awarded author and specialist for public relations and communications. <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/author/spencer-710>

<sup>17</sup> <https://wave.nmsu.edu/media-literacy/>

#### **4. How different people interpret this message differently?**

The effect from the media messages not always corresponds to the intention of the message creator and is not always the same among all people. Some will understand the message in one way, others in another way. For some people the message will provoke no interest and for others it will be relevant.

The British scholar Stuart Hall introduced the theory of encoding and decoding in the language during the 1970s. According to Hall<sup>18</sup>, everything in the language is encoded. The messages are encoded during the production and the creator hopes that the one receiving them will correctly decode them, says Hall in his paper “Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse”<sup>19</sup> The understanding of the messages will depend on our knowledge in different areas, our experiences and on the context.

The advertisements, for example, are multilayered and can be decoded in a number of different manners and from different angles. Very often different people will interpret them in different ways and some of them will

understand and see something other people do not see. Do our parents or our grandparents look at things around us in the same way and do they react in the same manner?

#### **5. What has been missed in this message?**

The messages do not include everything. Very often, either intentionally or unintentionally, the messages are missing important parts that could influence on the way in which we will understand the message or how we are going to decode it. The soda drink advertisements are always focusing on the refreshing element of the drink, but never on the ingredients. No soda drink advertisement will tell you, for example, how much sugar is in there. It is because the one creating that message has the privilege to decide what will be included and what will be omitted. The things become complicated when we enter the realm of news and information. If a journalist does not show the other side, if he/she omits crucial sections that would give different meaning and angle to the news, in that case we are saying that the reporting is unprofessional and non-objective.

<sup>18</sup> Stuart Hall is a British sociologist and political activist of Jamaican origin, one of the founders of the British cultural studies.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stuart\\_Hall\\_\(cultural\\_theorist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stuart_Hall_(cultural_theorist))

<sup>19</sup> [http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/2962/1/Hall\\_1973\\_Encoding\\_and\\_Decoding\\_in\\_the\\_Television\\_Discourse.pdf](http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/2962/1/Hall_1973_Encoding_and_Decoding_in_the_Television_Discourse.pdf)

## EXERCISE

WATCH THE FOLLOWING VIDEO  
AND TRY TO ANSWER THE FIVE QUES-  
TIONS OF RENEE HOBBS:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pES8SezkV8w&t=121s>

1. Who created this message and why? In this case you will notice it is very simple, but that is not always the case. There are cases when it will be difficult to tell whether it is media news or commentary, or maybe a hidden advertisement or propaganda.
2. Which techniques are used in this video? Here you need to identify at least five different techniques used for this media content to retain our attention.
3. What views and values are presented in the video?
4. Will you and your parents, for example, understand this media message in the same manner?
5. What do you think is missing in this video? Was that done intentionally or unintentionally?

## » EVALUATION

Essential part of the media literacy is the ability to critically evaluate the information. The evaluation is a skill to determine the quality of the media content i.e. whether some information is true or false, is it a professionally developed media news or manipulation, or whether it has been objectively or partially conveyed?

The research<sup>20</sup> implemented in 2012 by the American scholar Julie Coiro<sup>21</sup> showed that the American secondary school students are more interested in the relevancy of the content instead of its credibility, and that they very rarely, almost never, check the author, the type of information and the source<sup>22</sup>.

Coiro sets the four elements of critical evaluation:

**1. Relevancy** meaning whether the information is relevant. If we are trying to find a doughnut recipe on the Internet and the link recommended by Google is recipe for baking pie, we cannot say the information received is relevant for us.

**2. Accuracy** meaning the information includes facts and details that can be checked through alternative or primary sources.

Whether the author is professional journalist or common citizen publishing something on the social networks is, at the end of the day, irrelevant. The intentional publishing of fake

information is always wrong, but to identify the intentional lie is not so simple as it seems. The American professor Kerry Gallagher<sup>23</sup> differentiates several levels of fake information:

- Shameless lies: Someone is intentionally spreading lies
- Partial lies: Someone is using one fact in order to establish unreasonable assumption. Although that part of the information is fact, everything else is not.
- Intentional omission of relevant information: The one publishing the information is aware of particular

fact but is not disclosing that fact because it does not go in favor of his/ her theory.

It is very important to differentiate between lies and mistakes/ errors. The mistakes are not lies, they happen all the time and the professional journalists and media should have the virtue to apologize.

**3.** The third element is the **partiality**. Is the journalist or the one creating the messages is partially towards one side of the story, or he/ she is showing us all sides and lets us make conclusion.

**4.** Finally, in order to establish whether it is a mistake or intentional lie, whether someone is partial or not, we need to analyze the medium and establish what degree of **trust** it deserves. Whether the texts published by that medium are true and objective or it is continuously trying to manipulate its followers.

20 [https://www.academia.edu/21358440/Coiro\\_J.\\_Coscarelli\\_C.\\_Maykel\\_C.\\_and\\_Forzani\\_E.\\_2015\\_.\\_Investigating\\_Criteria\\_That\\_Seventh\\_Graders\\_Use\\_to\\_Evaluate\\_the\\_Quality\\_of\\_Online\\_Information.\\_Journal\\_of\\_Adolescent\\_and\\_Adult\\_Literacy](https://www.academia.edu/21358440/Coiro_J._Coscarelli_C._Maykel_C._and_Forzani_E._2015_._Investigating_Criteria_That_Seventh_Graders_Use_to_Evaluate_the_Quality_of_Online_Information._Journal_of_Adolescent_and_Adult_Literacy)

21 Julie Coiro is communicologist and author of the four elements of critical evaluation. <https://web.uri.edu/education/meet/julie-coiro/>

22 <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/evaluating-quality-of-online-info-julie-coiro>

23 Kerry Gallagher is a professor in media literacy and author of the book: Media Literacy and the Fake News: <https://www.connectsafely.org/fakenews/>

HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY  
FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

EXERCISE

CAN YOU EVALUATE WHICH  
OF THE FOLLOWING PHOTOS  
IS TRUE AND WHICH ONE IS FAKE?



I assume you are still looking at the photos trying to find some indicators helping you guess. You are thinking logically whether something is real and whether that can happen. The false information we continuously encounter in the media are possible, they can occur in reality, but have not actually occurred. In order to evaluate whether something is real or not we will not different approach.

For a change, try to find these photos on the Internet. Download them and then search in <https://www.google.mk/imghp?hl=en&tab=wi><sup>24</sup>. Check whether some media have already published the truth about these photos. If you do not succeed, you can always visit some fact checking website, for example: [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com), [www.FactCheck.org](http://www.FactCheck.org), [www.mediabiasfactcheck.com](http://www.mediabiasfactcheck.com)...

<sup>24</sup> This Manual includes tips on how to verify the accuracy of the photographs.



## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

### » CREATION

The media literacy has another, equally important, side. It is teaching us how to create media content, how to voice out our attitude and opinion in a better and louder way. Contrary to the past, today the digital media enable us to continuously create media content. We are continuously writing statuses on Facebook or publishing photos on Instagram, or maybe we are writing some blog or creating some music.

Do you have friend with no Facebook profile or any other profile on some social network? Today it is very rare to find people that do not create any online content. We are all infected with the new technological opportunities and want out photograph or posting on the social media to be seen by as much people as possible. What is even more relevant, we want people to like that and to share it.

What is motivating us to create and share media messages and content?

The psychologists very much research this area and so far they have identified a number of psychological reasons that are making us to be active online and to share different context. Some of these include:

- **Social acknowledgment:** We are looking for acknowledgment that something is good, beautiful, interesting. Same like going to school were are getting “A” as confirmation of knowledge and past work.

- **Communication:** The people are social beings. They need to develop and cherish links with other people.
- **Entertainment:** At the end of the day, the entertainment is integral part of our lives. We like to laugh, share, watch interesting videos and entertainment.
- **Support of the ideas:** Lastly, but in our case the most important, we have the use of the social media for gaining support of one’s ideas, political attitudes and beliefs. The social networks are highly useful for motivating, engaging and mobilizing of the people, even when that is done for some positive objectives such as betterment of the society, the conditions and quality of life.

The father of the Internet, Tim Berners-Lee<sup>25</sup>, said that the “Internet connects not only the machines, but the people as well”. To be connected to the Internet today is inevitable and necessity. However, the Internet is also full of traps, threats and dangers. The most common victims of those threats are the human right activists, journalists, civil activists and the bloggers. Very often they are victims of online attacks, especially in repressing societies. The Digital Defenders Partnership<sup>26</sup> undertook the obligation to defend and improve the Internet freedom and to assist the victims. Among other things, this Organization also developed a Digital First Aid Kit<sup>27</sup> designed specifically for journalists and human rights activists, bloggers who have been attacked by hackers.

<sup>25</sup> Tim Berners-Lee is an American scientist and inventor of www i.e. the world wide web. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tim\\_Berners-Lee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tim_Berners-Lee)

<sup>26</sup> Digital Defenders Partnership

<sup>27</sup> <https://rarenet.github.io/DFAK/en/>

## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

### » ACTING

The last and probably the most important segment of the media literacy is to act, which means how are we using the information we come into contact with through the media. Voting for a mayor once we have seen the interviews and debates of the local candidates and have acquainted ourselves with their programs on the Internet is acting. Furthermore, in order to become vegan once we have read a study about cruelty at some farms is a manner of acting. If we know how to analyze and evaluate the media message in a good manner, we stand much greater changes to make better decisions.

Different educators have different approach and strategy in educating media literate citizens. Some put greater emphasis on the analysis, reviewing the creation of, and perception of, the television programs and advertisements, while others evaluate the quality of the media content. Significant attention is also paid to the fourth segment, which is the creation of media content, production of video and audio content, photographing, etc., especially when it comes to education of the young people. The educational approaches are different in the same way as the target groups are different: young people, parents, teachers, civil society organizations and activities, and the locations where the media literacy can be practiced are also different: schools, universities, companies, institutions, media...<sup>28</sup>

**REMEMBER**

- Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media content
- Media literate people approach critically all media content and they do not allow their pre-judgments to impact their assessment
- Not all people and societies have access to media content
- Media literate person should always ask him/her self the following five basic questions:
  - Who created this message and why it was sent?
  - What techniques were used to attract my attention?
  - What views and values are represented through the message?
  - How different people interpret differently this message?
  - What is missing in this message?
- If we know who and how created some media content, it will be much easier to understand its effect
- The people sometimes differently understand the media messages
- Evaluating media content means to establish whether that content is:
  - Relevant
  - True (realistic)
  - Partial
- The development of the internet and new media enabled the citizens to create and share media messages and content
- Use tools in order to verify the information
- Use the social networks to share positive values, to mobilize others for useful objectives



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# THE YOUTH AND THE MEDIA

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**G**roup of students, together with their professor, analyze the TV programs they watched during the weekend.

Davor is the first – he is raising his hand and immediately jumps the gun: “I cannot watch series that have no touch with reality, where everything is fictitious. Although it could have happened, it never did, but someone invented it. That is why I watch only historical movies and series or programs based on real persons and events. For example, I am watching the Marco Polo TV series on Netflix.”

“Honestly, I think that some series that are fictitious are sometimes more realistic than the series based on real-life events”, responds Sara. “In the historical series you are only watching one part of the reality, only one part of their life – they never show what is, for example, happening with their children or families.”

Peter adds: “I love science fiction. What if something has not happened in reality, if it gives some vision for the future? For example, the Black Mirror TV series.”<sup>29</sup>

“I think it is irrelevant what type of series or movies you will choose, if you know exactly what are you watching. Is it fiction, science fiction or historically based TV series, it is not important, if you know who created that media content, what is the message that is sent and what values and ideas it promotes”, said the professor.

Zoran is impatiently waiting for the professor to finish, so he can continue: “I watched the news yesterday and I was amazed when

### **The media are not reality, they are a construct**

The media are not reality – they just represent, show one part of the reality in a manner they decided to do it. Even when it comes to TV series based on historic events, it is still just one of reality, not the entire reality. The media have no space nor time to transfer the reality live – they summarize it and show just one part of the reality in their manner. They are creating reality.

the editor was actually talking more than the actual news, explaining and analyzing the event. Is that how it should be?”

### **The role of the journalists**

The first and the most important duty of the journalists is the truth. When they report, the journalists aim to be fair and comprehensive i.e. to show the story from all aspects. The purpose of the journalist is to show the entire picture.

They are trying to show the things they have learned in the course of collection of information in balanced manner, and not to be partial towards any side. The journalist text needs to include different opinions, to be written decently, without insults and to respect the privacy of the people.

The professional journalists do not confuse the facts with opinions or rumors. They are neutral and they keep aside of the people and events they report about. The trust towards a journalist originates from his/ her independence, without obligations towards any government, political party of private interest to manipulate the information.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Black Mirror: [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2085059/?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2085059/?ref_=nv_sr_1)

<sup>30</sup> Manual on Learning Media Literacy in the Mother Tongue Teaching Process

<https://mim.org.mk/mk/publikacii/392-priracnik-za-izuchivanje-na-mediumskata-pismenost-vo-nastavata-po-majchin-jazik>

## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

“The news and information should be objective and present all sides of the event. The journalists should not take sides and be partial. If the editor of the journalist want to share their view with the viewers they need to do that in a part of the program that will be specially designated as opinion and attitude of the journalist. Otherwise, the viewers are fooled”, said the professor.

What I do not like is when the characters are shown as stereotypes – like they all originate from the same mold”, adds Milena. “For example, the gay people in the American and in our TV series. Justin from Ugly Betty, Jack from Will and Grace, Cameroon from Modern Family, Stan from Sex and the City, even Mario from our TV series Prespav. They are all the same. They are all best friends with the main female character, they all like fashion, like shopping and like musicals. None of them is good in sports, for example. My cousin is gay and he never misses a single football match, even hates to go to shopping.”

“The media representation of the gay people has been with the same stereotype characteristics for years. Our brains prefer known things because it is much easier like that to understand the things. Why to develop complex characters belonging to the LGBT community when it is much easier and cheaper to use stereotype models that work excellent with the audience. Furthermore, this mode is already approved at each audience, even with the conservative audience, so why experimenting and risking with something that is likely to cause reaction and will not achieve the desired impact and views. Am I right professor?” asked Jana.

“Absolutely. I fully agree with you. This is a big problem for mixed societies and cultures having problem understanding each other. When particular group is continuously represented by the media in a stereotyped manner, the people will start thinking that that stereotype is even truer, and it confirms their opinions as well.”

### Representation in the media

The media also impact the manner in which we view and understand other people, especially if they are not like us. The way they do that is called representation. The representation is the manner in which the media portray to us and help us (or not) to understand the concepts such as race, ethnic affiliation, gender, age or sexual affiliation. They have the power to shape our opinion and understanding about these important topics and to influence the creation of specific conscious ideas and behavior models.<sup>31</sup>

When reporting about events that involve some minority groups (ethnic, religious, sexual, etc.), the media often forget about the consequences and they present them only as anonymous part of a particular group, often calling them according to the name of the group (she was killed by minor Roma for 100 denars<sup>31</sup>). In that manner the affiliation to particular group or their collective identity is presented as the main reason or explanation of the activities of the individual, some type of collective responsibility.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/guides/z9fx39q/revision/1>

<sup>32</sup> <https://vecer.mk/maloletni-romi-ja-otepale-za-100-denari>

<sup>33</sup> Lazarova Galia, “The Roma Picture: Analysis of the new Bulgarian press,” Sofia 2002

## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The professor started thinking. “The media very often and unintentionally legitimize the prejudices and stereotypes, including the discrimination towards particular groups in the society. We need to carefully create the picture about the other, without generalization and by contacting and getting to know those who do not belong to our community and group.”

“Once on Facebook one of my friends shared a picture of a boy who was bitten by other children from other ethnic community. Then it turned out the picture was fake and downloaded from the Internet. Then what? Asked Aleksandar.

“Excellent question”, said the professor. “When we are creating media content we have responsibility - those that will read or see that. We are likely to cause serious damage if we are sharing things that are not accurate, especially on such sensitive topics.

### **What happens when are the ones creating media messages?**

The medium is a channel through which the creator of the message transfer that message to the recipient<sup>34</sup>. This process might look simple or, to be more specific, it was simple until two decades ago. The raise of the Internet and the new media changed the process of sharing of the messages and it is not just a one-way street as it used to be. Back in the 1990s we were sitting in front of the TV and were just receiving the message as we had no possibility to reach to them. Today, thanks to the new media, we can be receiver of a message in the same moment transform into sender. Every day we are sending out messages, publish Facebook statuses or Instagram photos. Same like the traditional media, we all have our audience towards which we are responsible. Some of us have 100 Facebook friends, others have 1,000, and there are also people who are followed on Facebook by more than 50,000 people. Their influence, compared to the number of people and reading them and following them every day, is sometimes greater than a smaller number of sold copies – 50,000 copies.

The positive side is that the new media enabled us to be active citizens, to speak out our attitude on different topics, to impact on specific decisions relevant to our life. The topics that are not sufficiently or properly treated by the traditional media today are very often part of social media promoted campaigns.

On the other hand, the unlimited number of opportunities for creating and transferring media messages provided for uncontrolled and unsanctioned sharing of false and manipulative content, messages that include hate speech or calls for violence. It is not easy anymore in the sea of information to assess what is good and what not. We therefore need the media literacy to help us make correct decisions. However, the media literacy is also helping us to be responsible and professional when sharing something on Facebook on Instagram that is when we are sending media messages. The stakes are the same, regardless whether we have hundreds or tens of thousands friends and followers on the social networks. We are responsible towards those we shared some information or content with.

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.encyclopedia.com/finance/finance-and-accounting-magazines/communication-channels>

## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

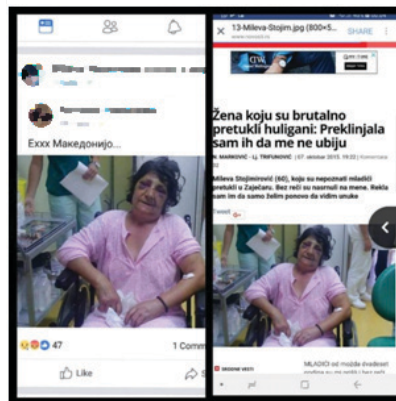
### EXAMPLE 1



In June 2018 a group of citizens protested against the name change. One of those protests was violent and several citizens and police officers were hurt. Individuals on the social network were just adding fuel to already burning fire by publishing (often fake) photos of people injured in the protest.

One of them stirred a lot of discussions and different comments, until someone checked and announced that it is a photograph of the Croatian singer Severina from a campaign against domestic violence from several years ago.

### EXAMPLE 2



Another photograph was published from the same protests in June 2018, which later also turned out to be fake. Although some were saying that the injured woman from the protest is from the protest, it turned out that the photograph is from Serbia, from a woman that was injured several years ago. The issue was that the photo was also shared by public persons with credibility and popularity. The public persons have even greater responsibility so they need to be attentive on what they share with their audience, friends and followers.

In both cases, it was the journalists who discovered that the photos are fake, but it is something that can be very easily done by any of us. There are several easy techniques to check when and when some photograph appeared on the Internet.

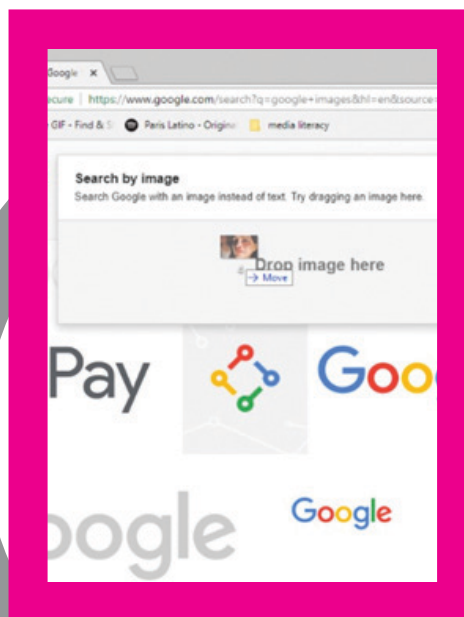


## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS



If the photo is available at a website, by right clicking on the photo just select the option (Search Google for image).

Then you need to use your detective skills and identify when was the photo published for the first time and who published it.



If you have found that photograph but not on a website and you are unable to use right click to search for it on Google, do that manually. Take the photo and drag in the search field for Google Images. Very easy. The outcome will be the same.

We cannot, of course, verify every single media message, but those that are relevant for us or for those with whom we share, we have to verify them.

“This thing with the photos is really great, I’m sure it will help us a lot. I was just wondering whether one of the photos of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie was fake or not. However, some-

thing that worries me is what do we do in a case of text? How can we do the checking?” asks Mia.

“It is an excellent question with no so easy answer to it. In any case there are several useful tips that will help us better evaluate the quality of the information. The most important thing is for us to turn into media detective, to verify the media content.”

## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

### » TIPS:

#### 1. Check the medium

Check the homepage and verify whether the medium has impressum, check other texts that were published by that medium. Verify its authenticity and how trustworthy the medium is.

#### 2. Evaluate whether the headline is neutral

Very often the media try to manipulate our emotions. We are talking about headlines calling on defense of the fatherland, treason accusations, praises for patriotism – all these things are indicator of unprofessional journalism. We cannot, of course, skip over the dishonest techniques that are convincing us (the headline does that) to open the news and we will find something exclusive, unbelievable and shocking. Such headlines, including those with large letters, enormous fonts, endless questionnaires and exclamation marks at the end are always reason for alarm.

#### 3. Check out who is the author

Search Google on what that author wrote in the past. Check whether he/ she is professional journalist, blogger or a common citizen stipulating his/ her own opinion. Unfortunately, we very rarely find the name of the author on many web portals in Macedonia. It is a sign that the need to approach that text with caution.

#### 4. Check the sources

If we read that the scientists say that four cigarettes a day is not harmful for our body, we need to ask ourselves – what scientists? From which institution or university? Where is that study? The scientists, sources close to the Government or from verified sources are not a realistic source.

#### 5. Compare what others wrote about that

If some topic is important for you, do not rely solely on one medium. Check what others wrote about the same topic and compare, and then you make your opinion.

Jana was raising her hand again. “Excuse me, and what happens when we want to create good and quality media content, to make good videos and photos. What media literacy can help us in that?”

“The media literacy is again here to encourage you to use your voice, to speak up loudly about things that are important for you and to offer you ideas and tools on how to better package your media messages and how to do that responsibly”, said the professor. A me-

dia literate person can initiate and manage discussion on gender equality on Facebook, can be writing blog or create video blog (vlog) about the positive and negative things in education, or even create and publish photos about the city pollution.

Example: Isabela Pan is a young video blogger covering important topics from our everyday life. The [www.medium.edu.mk](http://www.medium.edu.mk) website includes her videos where she, in a role of Mediana, shows the importance of the media literacy<sup>35</sup>.

The digital literacy, as part of the media literacy and skills, such as the Internet search, use of programs for editing of videos and photos, taking photos and shooting videos, will help you realize your ideas and present your ideas, attitudes and opinions towards the wider public.

35 <http://www.medium.edu.mk/srednoskolski-medium-3/video/573-mediumskata-pismenost-niz-pet-kratki-vidia1>

» **ADVICES:**

**How to create better and more interesting media messages and content?<sup>36</sup>**

**1. Create good quality content**

Although it might look simple, we very often neglect that. There is no other and simpler way. If we want to have content that will be read by more people, or idea that will attract more followers, we need to do it good and in quality way. We need to dedicate time to research, identification of sources and verification of our claims.

**2. Structure in a smart manner**

The internet users read quickly and they have no time for long content. There is nothing more putting off than a wall of text. Put the most important and most interesting things first, underline what is relevant, put pictures and videos.

**3. Always think what your target audience is**

You are addressing specific group of people, with specific characteristics and expectations. Always have that in mind. Ask yourself whether your audience wants to read or see that

**4. Use humor**

Although the topics you are treating are serious, it does not mean that your content needs to be serious as well. The people like funny photos, videos, comments that will more easily attract their attention about serious topics as well.

**5. Use videos**

The videos are becoming dominant content on the Internet. When searching for instant information that will be absolved quickly and without too much efforts, the video has advantage over the text.

**6. Make infographics or poster:**

The infographics or posters are easy to do and they show the content in a much better manner. Having in mind that they include photos, they are much more acceptable compared to the text for most of the Internet audience.

**REMEMBER**

- The media are not reality. They only represent or reflect part of the reality, in a manner they decided to do it.
- The first and most important duty of the journalists is the truth.
- The media impact the manner in which we see and understand other people, especially if they are not like us.
- The media very often and unintentionally legitimate the prejudices and the stereotypes, including discrimination towards specific groups in the society.
- We are responsible towards those with whom we have shared some content or information.
- Be media detectives. Use tools in order to identify whether some content is true, objective and professional:
  - Check the medium
  - Evaluate whether the headline is neutral
  - Check out who is the author
  - Check the photograph
  - Check the sources
  - Compare what others wrote about that
- Try to achieve better impact with the content you have created:
  - Create good quality content
  - Structure in a smart manner
  - Always think what your target audience is
  - Use humor
  - Make nice video and photos, infographics or poster

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.onlinemarketinginstitute.org/blog/2017/10/12-tips-creating-shareable-social-media-content/>

HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY  
FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The secondary school newspaper Medium [www.medium.edu.mk](http://www.medium.edu.mk) is a platform intended for all students in the secondary schools in Macedonia where they can create their content, write journalist stories and think critically.

Medium is open for the secondary school student thoughts about the educational system, the time they spend before and after school, about the music created by the secondary school bands, about the matura celebrations, about the (non)justification of the external testing, about the (non)inventive professors.

STEFAN  
MITIC



The two-way collaboration with Medium is one of the best things that happens to me in my life, which I am extremely grateful for. There are countless opportunities are opening up for me that are of great importance to me. I meet successful people and learn from them. The writing of texts, news, reports, interviews and the participation at the Media Day and in the Media Literacy Camp in Shtip helped building my personality. I'm studying how to access the information that surrounds me, I develop my passion for expressing and writing, and I mastered the skill of public speaking. Now I have a critical attitude and I think analytically and creatively at the same time. I believe that in the future I will develop and successfully contribute to the first secondary school newspaper Medium to remain informative newsletter number one for each secondary school student.

HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY  
FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

**KANITA  
AJDINI**



It's been a long time since the summer camp for media in Shtip was organized, but the things I learned there are still fresh as it were today. During this camp, I gained knowledge of the media and met friends from all over Macedonia. The things I did not know before, for example how to have better access to the media, how to write news article, how to take better photos or edit a video, I learned there. I gained the skills from professionals in their field, who did their best to transfer their knowledge to us. I continuously use the acquired skills and I hope that in the future I will be able to participate in such camps.

**NEVENA  
KIMOVA**



The greatest success of a journalist, in my opinion, is to clearly and precisely convey the message to others. I managed to acquire some of the skills a journalist should have as part of a secondary school medium. First, I participated in a media literacy camp that allowed me to become a media literate citizen and to expand my knowledge in the field of journalism. To be able to recognize when the news is fake, what is professional media content, how to make a reportage, a TV story and photo story. Later, I managed to apply all of this knowledge, practically, through various activities organized by Medium, both in the school and outside. Being a part of Medium is a great experience for me through which I managed to gain new friendships and practical knowledge that I will be able to apply in my everyday life.



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# MEDIA AND THE MEDIA LITERACY

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## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The editorial staff is full of journalists. Almost of all them returned from different events and started writing their articles in a hurry, as always, and careful not to miss the deadline. Aleksandar is apprentice journalist. He started working recently in the daily newspaper but he is able to quickly find his way around. “You have the obligation to promote the media literacy to your readers and to make them media literate, said one gentleman at the event I just visited”, Aleksandar was explaining to his colleague. “And I told him, sorry Sir, I don’t understand you. Why would we need to have such obligation? Our obligation is to inform correctly and timely, why would be also obligated to make them literate?”

The editor in chief sits on the last desk in the corner, reading some magazine. He looks like he does not notice anything that goes on around him. He suddenly raises his head and says: “Of course we have obligation. We have it because they are our readers and we do care for their correct information. They also need to know what is quality and professional information. We are not competent in the race for information – the online media will always be several steps ahead of us and we will be able only to offer quality and professionalism, but not speed. Our only chance to survive as a newspaper is to have audience that is media literate and wants to read well processed news, analysis and stories, instead of instant information. Here is our chance and that is why we have to make the people media literate.”

The media have exceptionally important role in a democratic society. There are no true democratic societies without free and independent media, and vice versa – we cannot expect to have independent and development media in non-democratic societies.

The media are said to be the fourth pillar of the country, a watchdog of democracy and permanently critical and corrector towards the central and local government.

The media, regardless whether they are public or commercial, traditional or online, need to be aware of their social role. They impact the public opinion and the decisions of the citizens in all possible areas who, being informed by the media, decide what clothes they will wear once they hear the weather prognosis, where to travel, for whom to vote by following the political debate channeled through different media, etc. In this sense, the media are required to inform in professional and impartial manner, adhering to the legal provisions

(in accordance with the Law on Audio and Audio-Visual Services), the Code of Ethics of Journalists, the principle of the Council for Ethics in the Media in Macedonia and the principles for public interest in the journalist. This especially goes to the public broadcasting service who also has legal obligation to promote the media literacy.

The media, together with the other three categories (media education, media policy and activities of the civil sector) are considered external factors that impact the level of media literacy in a society, therefore they cannot be neglected when media literacy practices are analyzed. That role of the media is intrinsically related to one of the basic human rights – freedom of expression and informing. The enjoying of this right by the citizens impacts the protection, empowering and cherishing of other social values, especially the public interest, the truth, justice, human dignity, democracy and economic development. They are required to stimulate, strengthen and defend the freedom of expression and the right to informing<sup>37</sup>.

37 Media Literacy in Macedonia [http://medium.edu.mk/attach/Mediumska\\_pismenost\\_komplet\\_FINAL.pdf](http://medium.edu.mk/attach/Mediumska_pismenost_komplet_FINAL.pdf)

## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

“I do not understand how can we, as journalists, do that? To educate the people to be media literate? We can write some article but is that enough?” asked Aleksandar. “There are different ways to do that, Aleksandar”, the editor responded. “For example, we can organize a Week Against Fake News and every day publish on the middle page different advices for the citizens on how to deal with the fake news. Alternatively, we could organize open day and host students to show them how a work in a medium looks like. We can also motivate the citizens to send us texts, photos and stimulate the civil journalism.

“In addition”, the editor continued, “our duty is to focus on topics that are in interest of citizens and to defend the public interest”. “I agree, but if we start writing only about things the citizens are interest in, we will end up being yellow press”, said Aleksandar. The colleagues left their computers, followed the discussion of their young colleague and eagerly awaited the response from the journalist.

“Ah, my dear Aleksandar. Public interest is the interest or benefit for most of the people in the society. We must not mix what the public is interested in which the interest of the public i.e. in benefit of the society.”

Mr.Zoran, one of the more experienced journalists in the newspaper interrupted the discussion. He grabbed the editor by hand and moved him aside. “I have great story. One of my sources in the Ministry of Interior says there is serious corruption in one state institution. Of course, he insists on anonymity. Unfortunately, there is no way to confirm that, I have no other source, but I still think

Public interest is not what the public is interested in, or what the public wants to know about, and it does not mean to meet someone's curiosity, nor can it be justified as moral criterion for someone's scandalous behavior. The right of the public to know cannot be excuse for peering into someone's private life. The unverified information and anonymous videos cannot be simply published in the name of protection of the public moral. The care for the children is not shown in a manner that will permanently put stigma on them as victims of sexual crime. Publishing videos of murders, victims of accidents about which all circumstances are known and beyond any doubt, contribute only to additional suffering of the victim families and satisfaction of the citizens' curiosity.<sup>38</sup>

that we need to publish this because we have exclusive story”. “Why don't you verify the story, why don't you look for other sources?” “I have no time for that, my dear editor, we are supposed to be sent to print in half an hour.”

The verification of information and the accuracy are moral imperatives of the journalism, that is why the journalist is required to verify the information using as much as sources as possible, but least two mutually unrelated sources.

The choice of facts must ensure objective information and consideration of all relevant aspects of the topic being discussed, and the need to be quick must never jeopardize the accuracy, credibility and professionalism of the story.

The journalist must provide “second party” i.e. provide opportunity to everyone concerned by the journalist product to speak up their opinion. This goes especially for cases when the journalist is expressing doubts or accusations, or when someone is subject to attack and criticism.<sup>39</sup>

38 <http://respublica.edu.mk/attach/priracnik-mediumi-11-03-2016-MK.pdf>

39 Handbook on Ethics in Journalism <http://znm.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%87%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%98-2012.pdf>



## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

“No way. The story will be published in other edition, once you verify it.” “But we cannot do it like this, editor. The competition shows no mercy, they publish unverified information, with no sources, no anything.”

“My dear Zoran, we are all journalists here, and as long as I am editor, we will be doing journalism. We shall not publish unverified information and we will fight for that to become norm, regardless how difficult it is and how much we have to fight with unprofessional media”, said the editor.

### REMEMBER

- The media must be aware of their social role. They impact the public opinion and the decisions of the citizens in all possible areas.
- The media can influence not only the political agenda, by raising the bitter issues in public debates, but they also have the capacity to empower the participatory culture and increase the involvement of the people in the governance process<sup>40</sup>.
- The media, together with the remaining three categories (media education, media policy and civil sector activities) are considered external factors that impact the media literacy level in a society.
- The media are required to defend the public interest – but not the things the public is interested in and what the audience wants to know.
- The right of the public to know cannot be excuse to peek in someone's private life.
- The verification of data and their accuracy are moral imperatives of the journalism,

Take a look at the witness statements of some of our best media workers, the photographer of Fokus, Mr. Tomislav Georgeiv, and the Al Jazeera, Mr. Milka Smilevska, in making efforts to satisfy the public interest, did huge mistakes by violating someone's privacy.<sup>41</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/StopDezinformacii/videos/726821534360305>

<https://www.facebook.com/StopDezinformacii/videos/1870467749743097>

The School for Journalism and Public Relations is organizing Media Day every year, where a number of printed, electronic and online media from several cities in Macedonia open their doors for the students from a number of secondary schools. The idea is for the young people to get acquainted with the role of the media in the society, how an editorial works and to get familiar with the basic journalist professional standards. By doing so, the students will be not only informed about how the media work but they will also get educated about the professional and ethical standards and why does it matter to have strong and professional media. Many of them write by themselves, take photos and shoot videos, hence many of them will produce media content and will be media by themselves. Which path they will choose – will that be the path of the some of the boys from Veles who became “famous” following the hyper production of fake news during the Presidential elections in the United States, or the path of Isabela Pan who opens up and considers some very relevant topics in the society in her vlogs<sup>42</sup> - will depend on the formal but also on the non-formal education.

<sup>40</sup> Media Literacy in Macedonia: a missing key in the active citizenship chain [http://medium.edu.mk/attach/Mediumska\\_pismenost\\_komplet\\_FINAL.pdf](http://medium.edu.mk/attach/Mediumska_pismenost_komplet_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> The videos are part of the Week Against Fake News which was organized during November 2018 by the Institute for Communication Studies.

[https://www.facebook.com/StopDezinformacii/?\\_tn\\_=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARCawKUfCq0kA4gQ3Q\\_mT4F55FAgmRXG1ZL0uexUHcMjPUyTJEQ4ERAAng4dXBjFkLMY4sUlcQucim5](https://www.facebook.com/StopDezinformacii/?_tn_=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARCawKUfCq0kA4gQ3Q_mT4F55FAgmRXG1ZL0uexUHcMjPUyTJEQ4ERAAng4dXBjFkLMY4sUlcQucim5)

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/user/11macedonia>

**Testimonies of the media representatives involved in the project:  
Media Literacy in an Age of News Overabundance  
Macedonian Media and Information Literacy Coalition (MAMIL)**

Publish me. This is the name of the project we had aimed to improve the media literacy among the people. We switched the roles – the citizens were reporters and the journalists were observers and mentors in the creation of the program.

We achieved the objective from two aspects. The first one because they also saw how the story is prepared, by meeting the professional, journalist and media standards; and the second one was the facing with the fact that it is not so easy to come up with proper story corroborated by facts and now with made-up stories, verification of sources and obtaining statements from relevant parties.

A total of twenty stories by tens or more citizens-reporters from all ages provided a more attractive dimension, compared to the daily habit of the citizens to see one and same people on the TV screens. It is a fact that, when watching something new, the attention of the viewers is greater. Our objective was how to make the people more media literate.



**STEVO  
BASHUROVSKI**  
Chief editor  
in Tera TV

HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY  
FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

**DRAGAN  
IVANOVSKI**

Editor in Chief  
of TV Plus  
from Kumanovo



With our work on the Inclusion Through the Media project, dedicated to children with special needs, in the frames of which we managed to implement a number of TV programs that we broadcasted in the TV Plus program, we can satisfactorily say that we managed to show the needs and issues these people have to our viewers.

Our team of journalists, cameramen and organizers learned a lot about the challenges the people with disabilities face but also about the manner of communication with them. This experience will be of extreme value for the employees in our TV house when dealing with further challenges in the work.

**MARJAN  
VELEVSKI**

Deputy Editor in Chief  
of Nova Makedonija  
daily



On behalf of the editorial office of “Nova Makedonija” daily, I can express nothing but compliments about the project since it opens up one extremely important issue which we present to secondary school students from all over Macedonia in the best possible manner. I am especially proud that I was personally involved in several activities, where I was directly made aware of the level of (non) information of the secondary students, which instigated us to transfer to them our knowledge and experiences in the best way possible. For all those who we did not manage to visit personally, the secondary school newspaper Medium was there for regular publishing of relevant articles exactly related to advancing of the media literacy.



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# CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND MEDIA LITERACY

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## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The conference room is full of people. Representatives of almost all civil society organizations working with marginalized groups are present and they wait for the start of the most important regional conferences in that year. Unfortunately, there is no single journalist in the room. “I don’t know where are the journalists, I emailed them the invitations this morning”, says Agens, project assistant. “What media you emailed?” Zorica the coordinator asks. “Peter from the ‘NGOs and Media’ organization gave me some list. I don’t know what’s going on”.

The civil society organizations in the modern digital era need to have developed set of skills on media literacy in order to properly understand, use and participate in the media space and landscape.

The digital era emphasized some of the existing issues of improper communication between the civil society organizations and the journalists and media.

Sometimes, unfortunately, some media are forgetting the role of the civil society organizations in the public life. Therefore, the civil society organizations and their representatives need to ‘remind’ the media that they exist and are relevant. We cannot blame anyone for, in some cases, slightly forgotten relations between these two stakeholders. We should therefore see in what way the media and information literacy can help the civil organizations to get involved in direct and productive communication with the media, and also to acquire the necessary skills.

“It was important to get the support from the media, so they publish the discussions and conclusions from the debate”, Zorica was nervous. One young person who was sitting

in the last row was listening the discussion, he turned and said: “I am journalist from the web portal ‘Denesno Vreme’. I received the message on my private email but I was unable to find any additional information about the event and there was nothing on your website or on the social network. In fact, you do not have Facebook page and I received the invitation just two hours before the beginning of the event. I also have some other obligations so I will not be able to stay longer.”

The organizations working with marginalized groups have even greater need for media literacy skills. Since the marginalized and minority groups are subject to discrimination, stereotypes, hate speech and media exclusion, the best way to deal with this, and many would agree with this, is the development of media literacy skills and practicing of good relations with the media

“You are right”, said Zorica. “But how can we focus on our work if we have to deal with the journalists?” “Today it is very important how you are going to present yourselves and your activities”, said the journalist. “It is almost equally important with the things you do. Imagine nobody finds out about your activities, about your efforts, regardless how relevant and well implemented they are. For whom you are doing those, what effect will that have? You have to understand that if you don’t learn how to present yourself, someone else will do this, unfortunately not always in a good and correct manner. You need to therefore invest more efforts to understand the media, how they work and how to cooperate better.”

The communication with the media is not simple thing. It takes preparation and initially defined steps and guidelines. The good media communication helps build better image and easy and effective sharing of the messages. Every civil society organization needs to have Strategy for Communication with the Media as well as Media Plan for every larger and more relevant campaign. The messages need to be clear and concise, intended for initially defined target audience. At the end, it is necessary to select the type of medium through which the message will be transmitted, regardless whether it is traditional or digital media, and will also depend on the type of activities and target audience.

**Here are some of the steps the civil society organization representatives can take in order to build and maintain relations with the media:**

**1. Communication Strategy or drafting Communication Plan for Communication with the Media**

If some civil society organization wants to influence the content of the news, events and social relations, instead of just following what is going on and act reactively, it is necessary to strategically plan in what way it shall implement campaign for greater media coverage of its activities or change of the existing policies and legal framework. In this regard, the organization representatives, especially the person in charge of communication and the person in charge of communicating with the media, must understand the manner in which the journalists and editorials work, as well as the specifics of its audience. The communication Strategy needs to be a general

plan of the civil society organization for communicating with the media, while the media campaigns can help its implementation. Maybe the most important question that needs to be answered is WHY are we doing this and what are our objectives?

**2. Defining of objectives/ reasons why to communicate with the media**

When drafting Strategic Media Campaign it is good to identify our objectives. For example, we need to ask ourselves and our team members:

- What the organization wants to achieve with the campaign?
- Does our objective make sense, is it rational and feasible?
- Do we want to increase the awareness on how our civil society organization works and to increase its visibility in the media, or we want to impact the change of policies, or maybe both?
- Do we want to organize campaign on national, regional or local level? The answer to this question will determine the types of the media we are going to focus on. For many civil society organizations in the world, especially if we are talking about small or medium sized organizations with limited resources, the traditional or mainstream media are a “fortress” that is very difficult to conquer. Therefore, many civil society organizations turned towards the Internet platforms and the digital media.
- Will the campaign focus on digital or traditional media, or maybe both?

**3. Identification of the target audience**

The identification of the target audience is of essential importance. The identification of our audience means determination whether we want to send the campaign message to the

## HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

general public, or to a certain group, such as young people, people with special needs, politicians, law makers or to different ethnic and religious groups. On the other hand, our target audience will determine the message we will develop and the choice of media we would use. It would be also good to identify whether our target group will be probably changing during the implementation of the Strategy for Media.

### 4. Defining the main messages

One of the most important elements of the media campaign should be your media message/ messages. These messages need to be adapted in a manner to fit the target public of the media campaign, to serve this group and to reflect the values, objectives and experiences of the organization implementing the campaign. There is a big chance for the media message to reach more people if it includes universal values such as human rights, freedom of speech, diversity and inclusion, climate change awareness, etc.

The media message needs to be clear, short and direct. Do not forget that long and complicated sentences and responses to the media will not be equally successful as the short and concise responses. The pieces broadcasted on radio and television are short. You must convey your message in clear and concise way that fits the media and their programs/ shows.

You can use humor or interesting message, but avoid shallow messages that could reduce the seriousness of the issue you are campaigning for.

The numbers and statistics must be accurate, based on research and studies imple-

mented by official or reliable civil society organizations. In other words, if the campaign message uses numbers and statistics, they must not be subject to any doubts in the interpretation.

Appoint a spokesperson or other persons who will send the message out to the media and public and who will be in charge of responding to media requests.

### 5. Avoid the main communication channels, by combining digital and traditional media platforms

The digital environment is constantly changing and growing, and it is therefore necessary to identify digital platforms, social media and networks and tools that correspond to our campaign. More specifically, depending on our target audience and our media objectives and resources, we would have to choose the most appropriate platform for implementation of our media campaign, such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and many others that are easy to use and available. However, would it be smart to spend energy and resources for implementation of the campaign on all these platforms? We must also not neglect the traditional ways of doing campaign as well. The best results are achieved when we have combination of traditional and digital methods for implementation of campaign. The media campaign should be planned and implemented in accordance with the values, general and specific objectives of the organization. Your target group and selection of media and digital platforms need to correspond to the needs of the specific media campaign, to the environment and to the time (the moment) of implementation of the campaign.

HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY  
FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

SOME TIPS ON HOW TO  
COMMUNICATE ON DIGITAL  
PLATFORMS:

1. Prepare a short, concise, and precise message avoiding formal language and jargon.
2. Be responsible when posting and publishing online. Do not post anything online that you would not say on live TV.
3. Clearly separate your private and professional profiles/accounts.
4. Be visual. Always use photographs and/or videos.
5. Be interactive and engage your audience.
6. Make your social media profile and website readable and accessible for the mobile phones' users.
7. Create online campaigns around so-called awareness days.
8. Counter discrimination and hate speech online.

SOME TIPS ON HOW TO USE  
WISELY THE SOCIAL MEDIA?

1. Do not just ask your Facebook friends and followers to like your page or post. Pose a question instead and start a debate.
2. Use hashtags on Twitter, use links, and add your own comments to retweets
3. Make short and visually attractive videos on YouTube.
4. Choose one filter or a set of filters on Instagram. Post your photos not too many times a day.

**REMEMBER**

- The civil society organizations and their representatives need to continuously remind the media that they exist and that they are important.
- The following is necessary for successful representation in the media:
  - Develop Strategy or Communications Plan with the Media
  - Define our objectives and reasons why we want to communicate with the media
  - Identify our target audience
  - Select the type of media
- When communicating on digital platforms it is also necessary to comply to certain rules:
  - To have clear and concise message
  - Separate the private from the official profile
  - Use photos, videos
  - To be interactive
  - Create posts when there is the greatest frequency of Internet visits
  - Oppose the discrimination and hate speech on the Internet



**HANDBOOK ON MEDIA LITERACY  
FOR YOUTH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**

**BLAGICA  
DIMITROVSKA**

President of the Association  
for Promotion and  
Development of Inclusive  
Society - Inkluziva



The MAMIL project helped the people with disabilities and their families acquire knowledge regarding media literacy and skills on how to use the media as efficient tool for communication with the public. Their active involvement in the development of media content increased the visibility regarding their interests and possibilities as well as their issues and challenges they face on daily basis.

The purpose of the initiative was to enrich the media content by including issues that focus on vulnerable and marginalized group of patients with rare diseases, thus contributing towards awareness raising for the needs of these people to be visible in the society. There is no doubt that the activities in the frames of the project significantly contributed towards reaching the objective... We reached to all target groups. We reached to the patients with rare diseases that resulted in increased readiness to talk openly about their problems, regardless of the taboo on this topic. We reached to relevant institutions and doctors but is the most important is that we managed to reach the media and we made the topic of rare diseases become integral part of the media agenda.

**MERI NASHOKU**

Program Director in  
the Youth Cultural  
Center - Bitola



The "Publish Me!" project opened up possibilities for the young people in Bitola to become reporters for the first time ever, to get acquainted with the role of the media but also to learn about the relevancy of their active involvement in resolving everyday life problems.

**MAJA  
ALEKSIEVSKA  
DIMIC**

President of the Association  
of Citizens for  
Supporting People with  
Rare Disease - Wilson



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# Handbook on media literacy for youth, media and civil society organizations

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This Handbook on media literacy for youth, media and civil society organizations is part of the project “Media literacy in the era of influx of information: Macedonian coalition for media and information literacy” that was implemented by the School for Journalism and Public Relations in partnership with the Media Diversity Institute from London and Nova Makedonija daily newspaper during 2016-2018.

The purpose of the project was to raise the awareness of the audience on the impact of the media content but also to stimulate the citizens to acquire knowledge and skills for critical perception of the information and use of media as prerequisite for active citizenship.



SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND  
PUBLIC RELATIONS

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