



POSITION PAPER

Media Literacy

May 2009

The European Newspaper Publishers' Association:

- Calls on the European Institutions to develop a clearly worded recommendation to Member State governments encouraging the establishment, development and financial support where appropriate, of independent media literacy programmes;
- Calls on the European Institutions to recognise the difference between education *with* newspapers and education *about* newspapers.
- Calls on the European Institutions to recognise the important role that newspapers publishers' content (both on paper and in the digital environment) plays in both functioning and emerging democracies and in helping to create active citizenship through providing a space for opinion and information exchange as well as promoting understanding regarding local, national and global events;
- Calls on the European Institutions to recognise the role that newspapers (both on paper and in the digital environment) play in supporting development of cultural industries;
- Calls on the European Institutions to ensure that newspaper publishers' content (both on paper and in the digital environment) is not excluded from the opportunity to become involved in media education programmes managed by the European Union; underlines that programmes for the formation of media literate citizens are incomplete without news media components;
- Encourages the European Institutions and Member States to develop campaigns aimed at raising awareness of the need for respect of copyright;
- Calls on the European Institutions and Member States to encourage cooperative efforts between the press and search engines to establish fair rules of the game that allow the press to remain economically viable; this is essential for the press to be able not only to exist, but more importantly, to serve democracy through information.

Media Literacy includes traditional as well as digital media, and newspapers fall into both categories; whether on paper or by any means of digital support, they are often the main source of written content reporting on news events and commentary. ENPA believes that in order to clarify the policy debate, media literacy should focus on content rather than platform.

Media literacy is of growing importance in shaping both European and national media policies. At the European level, EU policy documents have focused predominantly on the Internet and audiovisual media, with the written press featuring only marginally. ENPA therefore feels that it is timely and of great importance that we demonstrate – on behalf of European newspapers – the positive impact that newspapers can have in helping young, less young and old Europeans become media literate citizens. This necessitates an investigation into the following areas:

- It is necessary that decision makers have a sound understanding of the difference between education *with* newspapers versus education *about* newspapers. The newspaper industry has been at the forefront of explaining why newspapers should play an important role both in the debate on media literacy and by helping to formulate criteria to assess and improve media literacy levels.
- The newspaper industry across the different markets in Europe has been active for many years at the national level in specially developed “Newspaper in Education” programmes.
- Newspaper publishers want any digital user to enjoy using and contributing to the future of their content. This requires a renewed understanding through online media literacy on principles of copyright and the value of information.



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Understanding education *with* newspapers versus education *about* newspapers

A distinction can be made between “educating with newspapers” and “educating about newspapers”. This difference is important to comprehend fully.

Educating *with* newspapers should be a lifelong learning experience. Newspapers can contribute to lifelong education because they constantly keep people informed about the latest developments, even after they have finished school. Educating *with* newspapers can also mean that the newspaper helps promote literacy amongst the young and beyond this, skills in mathematics, the natural sciences and problem solving. A recent study (2006) from Finland’s University of Jyväskylä’s Institute for Educational Research, focusing on a sample of 6000 Finnish 15-year olds found that reading newspapers is beneficial to such skills for young people because all of these require an ability to comprehend drawings, charts and pictures alongside text.

Cultural creation and dissemination as well as educating *about* newspapers refer to the concept of media literacy which includes the development of critical analysis skills and learning to compare and distinguish between different media. ENPA believes that media literacy projects should aim to achieve the following key objectives for critical awareness:

- *Equip people of all ages, not just the young, with the skills required to analyse and evaluate the content of individual articles or publications of the written press. A reader needs the skills to know how to interpret the intentions of any one particular article. This might include distinguishing between a news article, an opinion comment, news taken from secondary sources, and first-hand reporting or being able to understand why some news takes precedence over other news. The reader should also be well equipped to interpret the editorial line taken by a publication overall (this relates to people’s preference for one newspaper over another).*

Critical thinking skills can also apply to the evaluation of advertising found in a newspaper and the format of the paper in light of the advertising content – e.g. distinguishing the difference between advertising and editorial in general and being able to appreciate the separation between advertising and editorial.

Furthermore, it is imperative that media literacy will not be reduced to visual literacy. Being able to read and interpret written texts, in turn, is essential in understanding images that are broadcast through audiovisual media.

- *Educate readers vis-à-vis the major role that the written press plays in a democratic society (often quoted as the fourth pillar of democracy) and in upholding true principles of freedom of expression. Making the public aware that at its best, the role of the press is paramount in holding authorities accountable for their actions e.g. through rigorous investigative reporting. This is a well-established role for newspapers.*
- *Raise people’s awareness that the press (both on paper and in the digital environment) exists because it believes in the public’s right to information and knowledge as well as in the improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture of the European peoples¹. One of the basic duties of the press is to inform, which is connected to the professional rights of journalists to receive information. Moreover it is the duty of public authorities to give information. All citizens have the right to receive information.*

In addition, initiatives should also serve to:

- *Promote the use of digital media among all age groups: only targeting youth creates and exacerbates a generational divide.*

¹ Also taking into account newspapers’ strong contribution to the development of cultural industries as demonstrated in the “Study on the Economy of Culture in Europe”: Study prepared for the European Commission, by KEA/ Media Group (Turku School of Economic and Business Administration) /MKW Wirtschaftsforschung GmbH, October 2006. Web: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/key-documents/doc873_en.htm



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- *Increase all media consumption:* although this can be perceived as a commercial interest, ENPA would like to highlight that it is also in the interest of societies that individual citizens use news media in order to be able to establish, analyse and evaluate opinions on political, social and economic developments around the world that affect them.
- *Inform people that newspapers provide variety:* newspapers not only provide citizens with the information that they want, but also useful information and content such as opinion, debates and in-depth research that they might never have realised they would be interested in.
- *Raise awareness of newspapers' role in the community:* newspaper publishers and editors seek to contribute to the development of the community around them - they reflect the highs as well as the lows of the community and are in many ways instruments that support social cohesion. At the same time, newspapers serve the empowerment of individual citizens in their efforts to inform themselves about and actively participate in their community.
- *Promote active participation by citizens in democracy and the exchange of information.* To this end, newspapers provide interactive platforms enabling citizens to enter enlightening debates and interact with each other not only in the paper product but also digitally and sometimes even by organizing public debating sessions.

A highly dynamic newspaper industry for European citizens

The modern media helps develop citizens and to encourage them to take part in the institutions of democracy. This is often a significant reason why many newspaper publishers have developed media literacy projects. Again, the 2006 Finnish study (see page 1 above) has demonstrated that young newspaper readers are more inclined to take an active part in civic and social life than others, proving the positive influence that newspapers have on young people.

There already exists a plethora of Media Literacy initiatives across Europe, many of which are financially supported by newspaper companies or national newspaper associations. These include the World Association of Newspapers' "Newspapers in Education (NIE)" programme, designed to stimulate young people's awareness of the diversity of news sources. These projects operate in an open and transparent way. Schools would rather receive free newspapers, than have to pay to use them in the lessons – especially as the general education budgets are often very strict.

Newspapers and digital media literacy

Newspaper publishers have embraced the opportunities that the online environment offers them. Readers can participate in newspapers' online communities through editorial blogs, online forums, or educational games. Through these tools, newspapers have an opportunity to develop a two-way, participative relationship with readers.

For newspapers, educating young people about the importance of copyright protection and on the value of newspapers' content is essential. Information needs to be recognised for what it is worth now and in the future: as the saying goes, "knowledge is power", but people equally need to be informed in the Internet age on the value of information in terms of the value and respect of copyright as a contribution to the knowledge economy. However, it should not be limited to the youngest. The biggest copyright infringements on newspapers' content occur mainly on a wider scale (commercial companies, public bodies/institutions, universities, libraries, search engines, etc). Copyright awareness should also be promoted in these wider circles, where infringements could be particularly damaging to newspapers' competitiveness.

The European newspaper industry is counting on the European Institutions not to regulate the industry, but to create conditions that enable the press to play its role as a guardian of democracy and to flourish in the 21st century.

The European Newspaper Publishers' Association (ENPA) is an international association, defending and promoting the interests of the European newspaper publishing industry at different European and international organisations and institutions. ENPA represents over 5,200 national, regional and local newspaper titles, published in 23 European Union Member States plus Norway and Switzerland. More than 150 million newspapers are sold and read by over 300 million Europeans every day.