

Media Literacy

New Conceptualisation, New Approach¹

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Media literacy is the term used to describe the skills and abilities required for conscious, independent development in the new communication environment – digital, global, and multimedia – of the information society. Media literacy is taken as the outcome of the media-education process.

However, the concept is polysemic and competes with other terms such as audiovisual literacy, digital literacy, and so on. Therefore, a clear definition should be given and, more importantly, the various approaches to media literacy through different policies should be considered.

In this article we shall see how, from the UNESCO and European Union definitions of media literacy, as well as other European initiatives, a conceptualisation can be framed that, besides delineating the field of media literacy, illustrates its different areas and aspects.

We need to move closer to a general understanding.

Media Education in the International Context

Media education and its outcome *media literacy* have been described and defined in an international context by UNESCO, as part of an initiative that began in 1982 with the conference in Grünwald (1982)³, and continued with conferences in Toulouse (1990)⁴, Vienna (1999)⁵ and Seville (2002)⁶.

UNESCO's work focuses on what is known as media education, which is the immediate predecessor of media literacy in its broadest sense.

In Europe, at the start of the 21st century, *the term media education was used with that of media literacy*, doubtlessly in an attempt to include and expand digital literacy, which has been a large part of movements to promote the development of the information society and narrow the digital divide.

This work has been carried out with the support of the Council of Europe⁷ and the European Commission – which throughout 2006 and 2007 has supported a Group of Experts in the field of media literacy and has launched a public consultation on the subject⁸. The work has also been supported by the *European Media Charter*⁹ and a number of public media regulation authorities, such as the United Kingdom's OFCOM¹⁰.

Using all of these proposals, and in particular following the headway made by UNESCO and European Commission on the topic, we shall draw up a comprehensive concept map.

There were four stages in UNESCO's formalisation of the concept of media education.

The first, captured in the Grünwald declaration of 1982, was the creation of the field of media education, which focused attention on the impact of the media on training and education.

The second, brought forward by the 1990 Toulouse conference was the systematisation and more precise definition of the field.

Thirdly, the 1999 conference in Vienna,¹¹ took a new look at media education in the context of digital advances and the new communication era that came about as a result.

The fourth was the UNESCO Seminar in Seville held in 2002¹², which adopted the definition of the field developed in the Vienna conference and highlighted the need for action through active promotion policies in four areas: 1) Research; 2) Training; 3) Co-operation between schools, the media, NGOs, private business and public institutions; 4) Consolidation and promotion of the public sphere of society and its relationship with the media.

We shall now look at European contributions.

The most basic definition of media literacy is provided by OFCOM, which states that media literacy consists of 'the ability to access, understand and create communications in a variety of contexts'¹³.

According to the *European Charter of Media Literacy*¹⁴, there are seven *areas of competence* (or know-how) related to media literacy:

- Effective use of media technologies to *access, store, retrieve and share* content to meet individual and community needs and interests;
- Accessing and making *informed choices* about, a wide range of media forms and content from different cultural and institutional sources;
- *Understanding how and why* media content is produced;
- *Critically analysing* the techniques, languages and conventions used by the media, and the messages they convey;
- *Creative use of the media* to express and communicate ideas, information and opinions;

- *Identifying, avoiding and/or challenging*, media content and services that may be unsolicited, offensive, or harmful;
- Making effective use of media in the exercise of *democratic rights* and *civil responsibilities*.

Meanwhile, according to the European Commission, media literacy involves a variety of skills and abilities related to the media, its images, language, and messages: “Media Literacy may be defined as the ability to *access, analyse* and *evaluate* the power of images, sounds and messages which we are now being confronted with on a daily basis and which are an important part of our contemporary culture; as well as to *communicate competently* using available media, on a personal basis. Media literacy concerns all media, including television and film, radio and recorded music, print media, the Internet and other new digital communication technologies”. This definition is complemented with a series of broader considerations, which we shall look at below¹⁵.

On the one hand, the *media concept* (with the corresponding *messages* and *languages*) refers to all means of communication that form part of daily life and incorporate contemporary culture, independently of the specific nature of the medium (image, sound, written word...) ¹⁶.

On the other hand, the skills related to media literacy can be summarised in four areas of ability: *access, analysis, evaluation* and *creative production*¹⁷. All of these skills boost aspects of personal development: *consciousness, critical thinking*¹⁸ and *problem-solving abilities*.

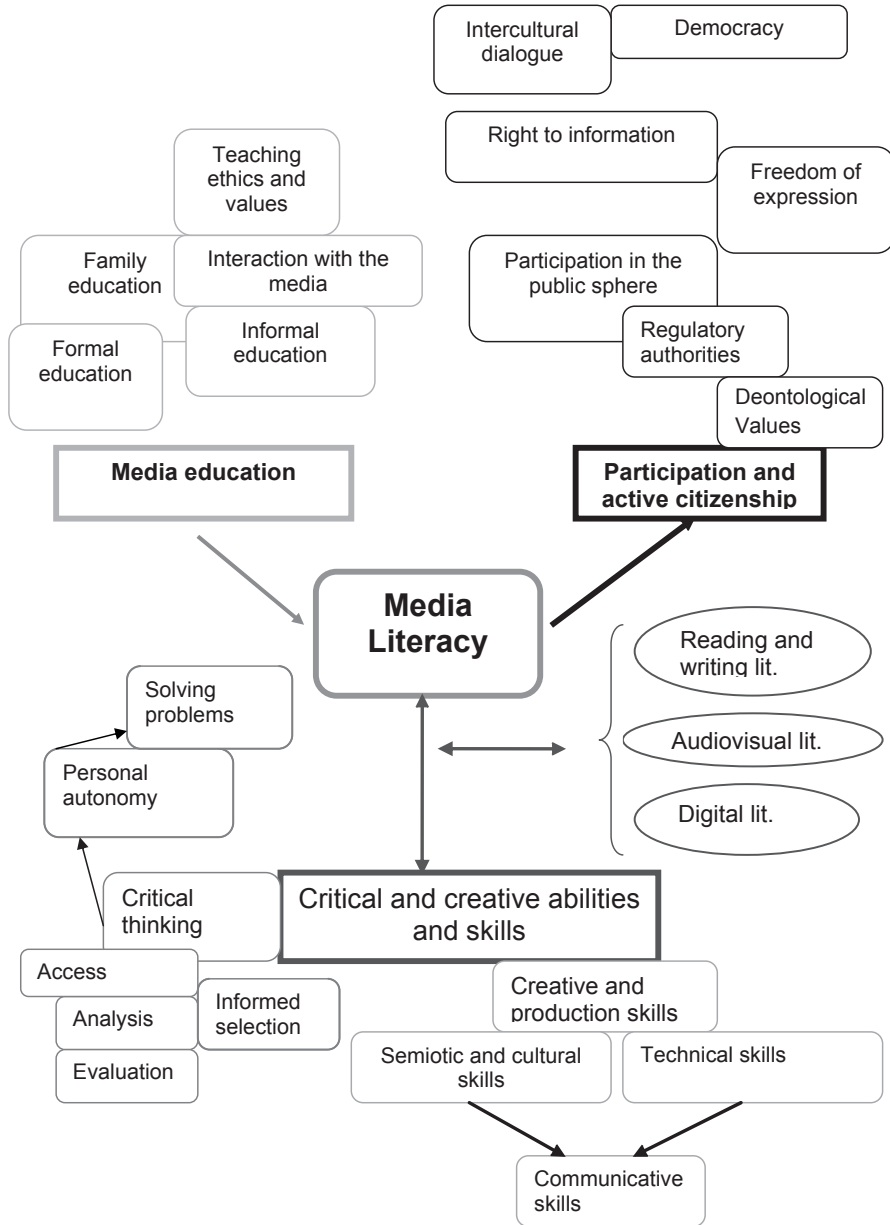
When considering other elements that help to define the field of media literacy conceptually and thematically, one must remember that it is the outcome of a learning (and teaching) process in any given context, but particularly in formal, informal, social, family, and media settings. This multi-contextual process leads to the acquisition of specific abilities and competences, in addition to attitudes and values. The process is termed *media education*¹⁹.

Media literacy should not be treated as an isolated or independent skill. On the contrary, it is a skill that involves and encompasses other skills and forms of literacy: *reading and writing literacy, audiovisual literacy* (often referred to as image or visual literacy) and *digital or information literacy*²⁰.

Furthermore, media literacy is a necessary part of *active citizenship*²¹ and is key to the full development of *freedom of expression* and the *right to information*. Therefore, it is an essential part of *participatory democracy*²² and *intercultural dialogue*. “Today, media literacy is as central to active and full citizenship as literacy was at the beginning of 19th century,” DG INFSO Commissioner Viviane Reding (Press release IP/06/1326, Brussels, 6 October 2006).

These concepts can be linked to, and complemented by, different terms and areas involved in media literacy.

The following chart is a conceptual map that gives a visual representation of the relationships between these concepts.



In the centre, media literacy appears as the result of a process, “media education” which is described through different concepts in the upper left of the chart.

Concepts related to “participation and active citizenship” are located on the upper right hand side.

In the lower part, elements that make up media literacy are divided into two main areas, one related to critical thinking, and another related to creation and production skills.

Finally, the three types of literacy that make up media literacy – reading and writing, audiovisual and digital literacy – are positioned to the right of media literacy.

The sole aim of the chart is to illustrate the different concepts related to media literacy and show how they are interlinked.

Areas of Media Literacy

For a complete definition of an operative model of media literacy, it is important to consider the competence areas into which the necessary skills are divided.

The following areas can be identified from the European Commission's definition:

- *Access*: This refers to the opportunities for using media. We shall make a distinction between a) physical access to media and to the contents of the media; and, b) the *ability – both cognitive and practical – to use such media properly*²³. To cover both aspects, we shall talk about *conditions of access*.

In this way, it will be possible to consider different conditions of access that exist among individuals, age and gender groups, social and cultural groups, and according to geographic contexts, and disabilities. A distinction can also be made between different conditions of access to electronic media (film, radio, television, and telephone) and digital media, such as the Internet. Access conditions will obviously vary according to the *physical availability* of instruments and tools, the *social and institutional rules and regulations* governing the use of media, and the different kinds of capabilities or disabilities.

- *Analysis and Evaluation*: This refers to a) the ability to read²⁴ *understand*²⁵ and *evaluate*²⁶ media content²⁷ and, b) the ability to sense and understand the conditions and possibilities of the media as tools.

There are several sub-areas to reading, understanding, and evaluation: 1) the ability to seek, locate, and select information to suit the individual's needs; 2) the individual ability to evaluate the information according to parameters such as truthfulness, honesty, interests of the broadcaster, etc.

Analysis and evaluation involve the most sophisticated abilities and skills such as *critical thinking* and *personal autonomy*.

- *Communicative competence*: This is the set of abilities that allow individuals to create messages from different codes – and produce and distribute

them using the different media available. Therefore, it includes creative, technical, semiotic, and social skills.

The theory of communicative competence goes back a long way. Originally, it referred to the ability of speakers to use their linguistic abilities adequately, according to the target group and the context (Noam Chomsky²⁸). In other words, it is a pragmatic skill. Jürgen Habermas²⁹ redefined it as a universal pragmatic skill that allows interaction between people and is based on rules. This is the skill, which should be normally widespread, that allows citizens to be active and engage in the public sphere. It is precisely in this light that it should be seen as a skill for civil communication.

New media have greatly improved people's skills for creating and producing messages, and have produced a qualitative leap ahead from the previous model of mass communication. Media literacy is tightly bound up with this new context and introduces a new framework for the development of communicative skills.

Elements of Media Literacy

The concept map from the previous section, can serve to improve the design of a general conceptualisation for the analysis of the process of media literacy, highlighting the contexts and the role of all the different players.

We shall evince the distinction between contexts, players, competences, and areas.

Our objective is to interconnect the theoretical models with empirical policies aimed at promoting and driving literacy.

To create an operational chart on media literacy, the following essential elements must be highlighted:

- *Contexts*: Physical and institutional spaces in which certain players interact in order to achieve a functional objective. A distinction is made between the *personal context* – which relates to the individual activity of a person as part of his/her private and personal life; *family context*, at the heart of family relationships, and generally in a family setting; *educational context*, corresponding to institutional spaces, schools, and formal teaching; *media context*, a space created by the interaction of individuals with the media, its messages and its uses; and *civil context*, in which citizens perform their public activities in accordance with their rights, duties, and responsibilities. Each context determines specific conditions of access and use, and occasionally, regulation, of the media.
- *Players*: People, groups, institutions with a particular status and specific role in a given context. These players are defined by different parameters: the attributes of the person, roles, situation and institutional characters and their social function.

- *Competences*: Set of skills and abilities that enable particular players to perform a specific function. There are specific skills for each player and area.
- *Processes*: Activities linked to all the above elements.
- *Areas*: Areas of activity and processes that, in a given context, bring together different actors with specific aims.

The table below illustrates how all these elements interrelate:

Contexts	Actors	Competences	Conditions and processes
Personal	Adults	Personal training and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions of access and use • Self learning • Tutoring and accompaniment • Media production activities
	Children and young people		
Family	Parents and tutors	Skills of parents and tutors in media education and media literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions of access, use and accompaniment of media and ICT in the home • Family media education activities • Media production activities
	Children and young people	Media skills of children and young people	
Educational Media Civil	Authorities	Skills in media education policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions of access, use and accompaniment of media and ICT in educational centres • Curriculum: Objectives, contents and activities related to media and ICT • Media education and ICT-related activities in the curriculum • Media production activities
	Teachers and educators	Skills in media education of teachers, parents and tutors	
	Parents and tutors		
	Students	Students' media literacy skills	
	Authorities ³⁰	Skills in media literacy policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions of regulation and media participation • Media literacy activity of regulatory authorities • Media literacy activity of the media • Media literacy activity in businesses • Media literacy activity of professionals • Audience training, skills and participation
	Businesses	Skills in media literacy	
	Professionals	Training and skills in media literacy policies	
	Audiences	Media literacy	
	Associations ³¹	Skills in media literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions of media regulation and participation by citizens • Media literacy activity of public authorities • Media literacy activity of associations • Media literacy activity of communities • Training, skills and participation of individuals
	Communities ³²	Skills in media literacy	

Possible Approaches

This general model shows the main variables that can define approaches to media literacy.

Depending on the different needs and demands, there are projects and activities that require different strategies, contexts, players, and skills, with particular emphasis on specific abilities and subjects.

Although there are several ways of combining the various elements, we shall link and define some of the most important possible approaches to media literacy:

- *Government (or government-related) policy activities:* Those developed by government and institutional authorities aimed at promoting media literacy. They include investment, subsidies, support, rulings, control, vigilance, etc.

Ordinarily, the purpose of such undertakings is to establish methods and improve conditions to facilitate action from other citizens' groups aimed at meeting specific objectives.

Some examples: Moves made by the education ministries of various European countries to establish an educational curriculum related to media literacy; the work of centres such as Spain's CNICE; the Bundesprüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Medien: BPjM (Federal Department for Media Harmful to Young Persons) in Germany; the Ministero delle Comunicazioni, Italy; or the Landesbildstellen in Austria; CLEMI in France and Belgium's Conseil de l'éducation aux médias, etc.

- *Family activities:* The leading players are family members – both individually and as a group – although other entities are often involved in these processes to provide stimuli and frames of reference. In general, they are intended to promote exchanges, actions, and co-operative tasks to encourage the use of – and access to – communications, thereby promoting family and personal use of the media.

The objective of many of these elements is to promote dialogue between family members; establish objectives, rules, and guidance for media use; and promote individual autonomy and group consensus in a family setting.

Some examples: APTE. Les écrans, les médias et nous in France ; Collectif interassociatif Enfance et Media (CIEM) ; the Family Friend Festival in the United Kingdom; Movimento Italiano Genitori (MOIGE) in Italy; etc.

- *Civil participation:* This is the participation of citizens in activities related to media literacy involving different authorities in the media (generally, public media) domain. That is, participation in consultative or debating forums; in spaces provided by the media for response or discussion; in spaces for evaluation and criticism of media contents; and in spheres that have been instituted by law in various countries for the active participation of citizens.

Some examples: R.A.P. (Association résistance à l'agression publicitaire) and casseurs de pub in France ; CMA (Community Media Association) and Community TV Trust (CTVT) in the United Kingdom; Media Hungaria Konferenciaközpontja in Hungary; Agrupación de Telespectadores y Radioyentes (ATR) in Spain; Associazione Spettatori Onlus (AIART) in Italy; ŠKUC in Slovenia.

- *Educational and training activities:* Based on the promotion of teaching and learning processes. They can take place in educational, school-based, formal, or informal settings; can be aimed at children, young people, or adults; and can involve professionals from education and lifelong training, the media, or other areas.

The objective of these activities is the acquisition of new knowledge, attitudes, or skills. They require the establishment of a basic curriculum, specific resources, and certain institutional conditions.

Some examples: Centre de liaison de l'enseignement et des médias d'information (CLEMI) and Délégation aux usages de l'Internet in France; The Hiiripiiri Project in Finland; CNICE and Grupo Comunicar in Spain; Media Education (MED) in Italy, etc.

- *Campaigns:* These are the orchestrations of various actors, media, and resources to achieve specific objectives. They are generally intensive and short-lived. Media-literacy campaigns can aim at promoting specific information, causing changes in attitude, or heightening public awareness.

Some examples: La semaine de la presse dans l'école (Press Week in Schools) and La semaine sans 100 télés in France; "First Writes" in the United Kingdom, etc.

- *Media activities:* Through their content, activities and suggestions, the media promote the acquisition of new skills and competences. Simple user guides or the distribution of programming and content guides are already, in themselves, instruments for the promotion of new uses and skills, and provide opportunities for the promotion of media literacy to a certain extent. However, the media could do much more systematic and sustained work with a marked impact on this promotion.

Some examples: BBC Learning Resources and Channel 4 Learning. Online educational products in the United Kingdom; El País del estudiante in Spain; France 5 and ARPEJ in France, etc.

- *Mediation activities:* These are carried out through stable links between different players involved in a given process. In the case of media literacy, mediatory activities generally involve producers and consumers; the media and users; citizens and authorities, etc. Entities involved in readers' rights that own publications or citizens' forums that establish independent regulatory organisations of the media are examples of this type of mediation.

Some examples: Oficina del Defensor del Telespectador y del Radioyente de RTVE and the Oficina del Telespectador de Antena 3 in Spain; the Consiglio Nazionali per l'Utenti in Italy; the Foro de Entidades de Personas Usuarías del Audiovisual (forum of users' entities) in Catalonia, (Spain); etc.

- *Regulatory activities:* The purpose of these is to promote standards of conduct – formal and informal, obligatory or discretionary, etc. – for the use and enjoyment of media and technologies. These codes can be established to cover different contexts (personal, family, educational, civil, legislative, etc.) and can be organised and set out in codes of conduct, standards, guidelines, etc.

Some examples: OFCOM in the United Kingdom; the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (C.S.A.) in France; the Autorità per la garanzie nelle comunicazioni (AGCOM) in Italy; the Consell Audiovisual de Catalunya in Spain; etc.

- *Professional and business activities:* These are media literacy initiatives organised, led, and carried out by business or vocational sectors. The activities are prompted by industrial or professional criteria.

Some examples: Media Smart and MindTrek Media Week in the United Kingdom; Internationales Zentralinstitut für das Jugend – und Bildungsfernsehen beim Bayerischen Rundfunk (IZI) in Germany, etc.

- *Production-skills activities:* Production-skills activities focusing on critical acquisition of media literacy and available to the general public. They can take place in different settings: schools, museums, cultural centres, the Internet, etc. They combine educational and development activities with activities in expression and communication.

Some examples: First Light Movies, Film Education, London Children's Film Festival and Showcomotion in the United Kingdom; Association Régions Presse-Enseignement Jeunesse (ARPEJ) in France; Idea Video Exchange Network (IVEN) in Hungary, etc.

- *Orientation and reference activities:* These centre on providing resources and criteria for the development of activities related to media literacy. They include the creation and provision of material resources, assistance systems, and consulting mechanisms; guidance and consulting for specific activities and subjects; introduction of codes of conduct and standards, etc.

The goal of these activities is to help, guide, advise, support, and strengthen the various work undertaken in the area of media literacy.

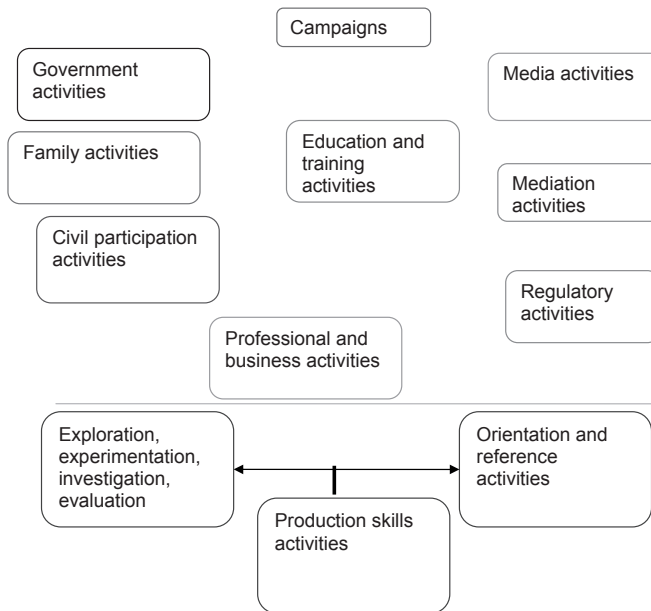
Some examples: Mediamanual.at in Austria; Informationssystem Medienpädagogik ISM in Germany; OMERO in Italy; Éducaunet in France; Hungarian Moving Image and Media Education Association in Hungary; etc.

- *Exploratory, experimental, investigative, and evaluation activities*: These activities are aimed at opening new avenues for the development of media literacy through the experimentation and investigation of new models and uses, and the evaluation of experiences.

They contribute to innovation, change, the search for precise objectives, and the evaluation of specific policies.

Some examples: Éducnet in France; Institut für Medienpädagogik in Forschung und Praxis JFF in Germany; Hans-Bredow-Institut für Medienforschung HBI (Institute for media research); Observatorio de la sociedad de la información (de Red.es) and the Gabinete de Comunicación y educación de la UAB in Spain; Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media in the United Kingdom; L'Osservatorio sui Diritti dei Minori and EURISPES in Italy, etc.

The possible links and complementarity between these activities are illustrated in the chart below.



The balance and complementarity between all of these activities ensure efficient functioning of media literacy and create the optimum conditions for their performance.

Notes

1. This text that originated from the *European Commission* is one result of the *Study on Current Trends in, and Approaches to, Media Literacy in Europe*. It seeks to provide a general understanding of media literacy in Europe. Hence, all examples are drawn from Europe.
2. Professor at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. Head of the communication and education department (Gabinete de Comunicación y Educación).
3. International Symposium on Media Education at Grünwald, Federal Republic of Germany. http://www.unesco.org/education/nfsunesco/pdf/MEDIA_S.PDF
4. "New Directions in Media Education" UNESCO International Media Literacy Conference in Toulouse http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=5680&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
5. "Educating for the Media and the Digital Age" 18-20 April 1999 <Http://www.nordicom.gu.se/clearinghouse.php?portal=linkdb&main=reconedu.php&>
6. Youth Media Education Seville, 15-16 February 2002 http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=5680&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
7. Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/media_literacy/docs/coe_fr.pdf
8. Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/media_literacy/index_en.htm
9. Cf. <http://www.euromedialiteracy.eu/>
10. Cf. <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/strategymedialit/strategymedialit/>
11. "Media Education"
 - deals with all communication media and includes the printed word and graphics, sound, the still as well as the moving image, delivered on any kind of technology;
 - enables people to gain understanding of the communication media used in their society and the way they operate and to acquire skills in using these media to communicate with others;
 - ensures that people learn how to:
 - Analyse, critically reflect upon, and create media texts.
 - Identify the sources of media texts, their political, social, commercial and/or cultural interests and their contexts.
 - Interpret the messages and values offered by the media.
 - Select appropriate media for communicating their own messages or stories and for reaching their intended audience.
 - Gain, or demand access to media for both reception and production.

The Media Education is part of the basic entitlement of every citizen, in every country in the world, to freedom of expression and the right to information and is instrumental in building and sustaining democracy. While recognising the disparities in the nature and development of Media Education in different countries, the participants of the conference "Educating for the Media and the Digital Age" recommend that Media Education should be introduced wherever possible within national curricula as well as in tertiary, non-formal and lifelong education.

 - Media Education addresses a wide range of texts in all media (print, still image, audio, and moving image) which provide people with rich and diverse cultural experiences.
 - In countries moving towards the introduction of new technologies, Media Education can assist citizens to recognise the potential of the media to represent/misrepresent their culture and traditions.
 - In situations where access to electronic or digital technologies is limited or non-existent, media education can be based on available media texts in that context.
 - Media education should be aimed at empowering all citizens in every society and should ensure that people with special needs and those socially and economically disadvantaged have access to it.
 - Media education also has a critical role to play in, and should be responsive to, situations of social and political conflicts, war, natural disaster, ecological catastrophe, etc."
12. Seville Seminar Cf. http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/files/5680/10346121330Seville_Recommendations.rtf/Seville+Recommendations.rtf.

13. Cf. http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/of_med_lit/whatis/
14. Cf. <http://www.euromedialiteracy.eu/index.php?Pg=charter>
15. The aim of media literacy is to increase awareness of the many forms of media messages encountered in our everyday lives. It should help citizens recognise how the media filter their perceptions and beliefs, shape popular culture, and influence personal choices. It should empower them with the critical-thinking and creative problem-solving skills to make them discerning consumers and producers of information. Media education is part of the basic entitlement of every citizen, in every country, to freedom of expression and the right to information; it is instrumental in building and sustaining democracy. Today, media literacy is indeed one of the key pre-requisites for active and full citizenship and is one context in which intercultural dialogue needs to be promoted. Furthermore, media education is a fundamental tool to raise awareness about IPR issues among media users and consumers.
16. The European definition is inspired by UNESCO's Grünwald declaration, according to which media education should cover each and every means of communication.
17. As in UNESCO documents, the European Union's public consultation on media literacy has emphasised creative production: "The most commonly expressed concern among the respondents was the importance of adding to the definition the ability to *create and communicate messages*, as this aspect of media literacy is viewed as fundamental in empowering people to become active and informed consumers of media. Moreover, the communicative aspect of media literacy is considered essential for enabling people to make effective use of media in the exercise of their democratic rights and civic responsibilities".
18. The concept of "evaluation" can be enriched – as called for by several experts in the European Union's public consultation on media literacy – with the idea of "critical literacy": Several respondents also stressed the importance of including *critical literacy* as part of the definition. Again, this aspect of media literacy is regarded as crucial in the formation and of an active and discerning citizen. "We would also stress the importance of critical literacy as part of the evaluation component of the definition, for accessing and analysing media messages are not effective if one cannot also critically evaluate those messages, distinguishing the honest from the deceptive, the public interest from commercial persuasion, the objective and trustworthy from the biased or partisan". (Sonia Livingstone, London School of Economics, and Andrea Millwood Hargrave, UK Media Literacy Task force. Also: "There exist many definitions of media literacy around the world. More and more often they include the ability 1) to access the media, 2) to understand/critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media contents, and 3) to create media contents/participate in the production process. It is not unusual that the definitions also include aspects of learning to use the media in order to participate in the process for social change, for development, towards increased democracy." (Cecilia Von Feilitzen, The International Clearinghouse on Children Youth and Media, Nordicom, Göteborg University).
19. According to John Pungente, media education "is concerned with helping students develop an informed and critical understanding of the nature of the mass media, the techniques used by them, and the impact of these techniques. More specifically, it is education that aims to increase students' understanding and enjoyment of how the media work, how they produce meaning, how they are organized, and how they construct reality. Media literacy also aims to provide students with the ability to create media products." We see media education as a process and media literacy as the outcome of this process.
20. Digital literacy is a natural consequence of the spread of digital technologies and the promotion of the information society. For a definition of digital literacy Cf. Pérez Tornero, José Manuel: *Promoting Digital Literacy*, European Commission.
21. "Media literacy, like print literacy before it, should be recognized as a key means, even a right, by which citizens participate in society and by which the state regulates the manner and purposes of citizens' participation" (Sonia Livingstone, "What is media literacy?" *Media@else*, (http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/media@lse/pdf/What_is_media_literacy.doc)

22. "Media education is a part of the fundamental right of each and every citizen of any country in the world to freedom of expression and the right to information, and is a tool for building and maintaining democracy". UNESCO: *ibid.* According to Sonia Livingstone, "Indeed, literacy is a concept grounded in a centuries-old struggle between enlightenment and critical scholarship, setting those who see literacy as democratising, empowering of ordinary people against those who see it as elitist, divisive, a source of inequality. Debates over literacy are, in short, debates about the manner and purposes of public participation in society. Cf., "What is media literacy?" *Media@else*, (http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/media@lse/pdf/What_is_media_literacy.doc)
23. "Access has two dimensions. It is, firstly, about physical access to equipment, in a setting where it is possible to use it in an unrestricted way. However, it is also a matter of the ability to manipulate technology (and related software tools) in order to locate the content or information that one requires" David Buckingham et al. "The Media Literacy of Children and Young People: A Review of the Academic Research" (London: Ofcom, 2005)
24. "Reading" is the ability to decipher a message with relation to a specific code and a particular communicative situation.
25. "Understanding" means the ability to link a meaning – previously decoded – to a specific personal context. It implies meaningfulness; that is, the ability to add meaning to the knowledge and interests of the person decoding the message.
26. "Evaluation" is the process whereby the contents of a message are classified and categorised in relation to previously acquired value scales.
27. Several traditions related to this subject have enriched the concept of media literacy. In Europe, the most powerful have been, and still are: firstly, the tradition of semiotic analysis, with important contributions by France and Italy, thanks to authors such as Barthes, Morin, Metz, Greimas, Umberto Eco, and Fabbri; and secondly, the tradition of British cultural studies by R. Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and Stuart Hall (assembled and disseminated in the field of media education by Len Masterman, A. Hart and others).
28. Cf. Noam Chomsky *Aspectos de la teoría de la sintaxis*, Barcelona, Gedisa, 1999.
29. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Teoría de la acción comunicativa*: I. Racionalidad de la acción y racionalidad social, II. Crítica de la razón funcionalista, Madrid, Ed. Taurus, 1981.
30. Government or public institutions involved in the intervention, regulation or control of the media system.
31. Formal groupings of citizens with recognised legal status
32. Active grouping of individuals who have functional objectives, but no legal status or formal regulation.