



## **MEDIA LITERACY**

### **COUNTRY REPORT: REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS**

**Country Report submitted to the European Commission**

**Pursuant to Article 33a(2) of the Audio Visual Media Services Directive 2018/1808 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) in view of changing market realities**

Radio Television and Digital Services Authority (RTDSA), Cyprus

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## **Part A: Legal and/or policy measure**

This section delineates the legislative measures and other legally binding instruments governing audiovisual media sector in the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) as well as the video sharing platform providers under Cypriot jurisdiction. It further elaborates on statutory obligations imposed on audiovisual media service providers and video-sharing platform providers with regard to the implementation of media literacy measures.

In addition to the legislative content, this section covers a broader array of policy measures adopted to advance and strengthen the media literacy skills and competences of the Cypriot public. This part concludes with an evaluative analysis of the adequacy and effectiveness of media literacy measures implemented by video-sharing platform providers subject to the jurisdiction of Cyprus.

### ***1. Legislative Measures and other Legally Bounding Instruments (including statutory obligations)***

The Audio-Visual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) 2018/1808(EU) was transposed into the national legislation of the Cyprus on 21 December 2021. Media Literacy is explicitly addressed within the legal framework governing audiovisual media services and video sharing platform services in Cyprus.

Pursuant thereto, Article 30C<sup>1</sup> of The Radio and Television Broadcasters Law 7(I)/1998 (as subsequently amended) stipulates the following:

*30C.-(1) The CRTA shall promote and take measures to develop skills in media literacy.*

*(2) The CRTA shall undertake, in cooperation with other competent governmental, semi-governmental and private agencies, to promote the planning and coordination of the development and implementation of programmes (research, educational, informational and other) to raise the levels of media literacy in the Republic.*

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/ind/1998\\_1\\_7/section-sc8759c4fe-8dd2-9faa-5322-93068b659547.html](https://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/ind/1998_1_7/section-sc8759c4fe-8dd2-9faa-5322-93068b659547.html)

(3) *Media service providers ought to participate in these efforts, on the basis of the planning of the CRTA, and in particular in disseminating clear and user-friendly information to citizens and in supporting awareness-raising campaigns, including on how to produce, promote, and distribute information and creative content in the digital environment, on the responsible use of the internet in general, as well as on how search engines work and how to make optimal use of them.*

(4) *For the purposes of this Article, the term “media literacy” means the ability to access, understand, analyse, use and critically evaluate the media and their content, the ability to create content in the media, as well as the ability to communicate safely and responsibly, especially through new technologies.*

(5) *The CRTA shall submit a report regarding the implementation of subsection (1) to the Commission, which shall be communicated to the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Education and Culture, Sport and Youth, no later than 19 December 2022 and every three years thereafter.*

(6) *The CRTA shall take all appropriate measures to comply with the guidelines issued by the Commission, upon consultation with the Contact Committee.*

It is noteworthy that a comparable provision is included in the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation Law, section 300A (as subsequently amended), which governs the public service broadcaster in Cyprus, namely the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC)<sup>2</sup>.

Article 18D<sup>3</sup> of the aforementioned law provides as follows:

*18D.-(1) The CyBC, in cooperation with CRTA, promotes and takes measures to develop skills in media literacy.*

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<sup>2</sup> The Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC) is country's public service broadcaster. Its operation is partially monitored by the Radio Television and Digital Services Authority (RTDSA). In brief, RTDSA is responsible for monitoring issues as regards the CyBC, concerning, among others, the following: advertising and teleshopping, political advertising during pre-election periods, sponsorship, right of reply, European works, product placement, prohibition of incitement to hatred, implementation of media literacy activities.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/ind/0\\_300A/section-scc3485fad-382f-a933-1e8a-e3c98089726e.html](https://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/ind/0_300A/section-scc3485fad-382f-a933-1e8a-e3c98089726e.html)

*(2) The CyBC participates in media literacy actions coordinated by CRTA, particularly, in disseminating clear and user-friendly information to citizens and in supporting awareness-raising campaigns, inter alia, on the production, promotion and distribution of information and creative content in the digital environment, on the responsible use of search engines and their optimal use.*

*(3) For the purposes of this Article, the term "media literacy" means the ability to access, understand, analyse, use, and critically evaluate the media and their content, the ability to create content in the media, as well as the ability to communicate safely and responsibly, in particular through new technologies.*

Furthermore, upon the transposition of the AVMSD 2018/1808(EU) into Cyprus national legislation Video Sharing Platform providers (VSPs) under the jurisdiction of the Cyprus also have legal responsibilities with regards to the implementation of effective media literacy tools and measures and on the notification of users about the implementation of the said tools and measures; article 32F(8)(j)<sup>4</sup> is the relevant one and reads as follows:

*32F(8) The measures mentioned in subsections (1), (3), (6) and (7) above shall consist of, as appropriate:*

*(j) providing for effective media literacy measures and tools and raising users' awareness of those measures and tools.*

Subsections (1), (3), (6) and (7) of article 32F, which are mentioned in 32F(8) provide the following:

*32F.-(1) Without prejudice to sections 15, 16, 17 and 18 of the Law on Certain Aspects of Information Society Services, in particular Electronic Commerce, and Related Matters, video-sharing platform providers under the jurisdiction of the Republic shall take appropriate measures to protect:*

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/ind/1998\\_1\\_7/section-sc68ad2a0d-c7cc-624f-5af7-e111292146f2.html](https://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/ind/1998_1_7/section-sc68ad2a0d-c7cc-624f-5af7-e111292146f2.html)

(a) minors from programmes, user-generated videos and audiovisual commercial communications which may impair their physical, mental or moral development in accordance with subsections (1) to (4) of section 29 of this Law;

(b) the general public from programmes, user-generated videos and audiovisual commercial communications containing incitement to violence or hatred directed against any person, a group of persons or a member of a group of persons in such a manner as to violate the fundamental rights protected by the Constitution of the Republic and/or the rights protected under article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;

(c) the general public from programmes, user-generated videos and audiovisual commercial communications containing content the dissemination of which constitutes an activity which is a criminal offence under European Union law, namely public provocation to commit a terrorist offence as set out in section 13 of the Combatting of Terrorism and Victim Protection Law, offences concerning child pornography as set out in section 8(3) of the Prevention and Combating of Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography Law, and offences concerning racism and xenophobia as set out in section 3 of the Law on Combating Certain Forms and Expressions of Racism and Xenophobia by means of Criminal Law.

(3) Video-sharing platform providers under the jurisdiction of the Republic shall take appropriate measures to comply with the requirements set out in section 30E(1) with respect to audiovisual commercial communications that are not marketed, sold or arranged by those video-sharing platform providers, taking into account the limited control exercised by those video-sharing platforms over those audiovisual commercial communications.

(6) For the purposes of subsections (1) to (5), video-sharing platform providers shall take the appropriate measures which shall be determined in light of the nature of the content in question, the harm it may cause, the characteristics of the category of persons to be protected as well as the rights and legitimate interests at stake, including those of the video-

*sharing platform providers and the users having created or uploaded the content as well as the general public interest.*

*(7) Video-sharing platform providers under the jurisdiction of the Republic shall apply the measures provided for by subsection (6) above. Those measures shall be practicable and proportionate, taking into account the size of the video-sharing platform service and the nature of the service that is provided. Those measures shall not lead to any ex-ante control measures or upload-filtering of content which do not comply with section 18 of the Law on Certain Aspects of Information Society Services, in particular Electronic Commerce, and Related Matters.*

*For the purposes of the protection of minors, provided for in paragraph (a) of subsection 1 of this section, the most harmful content shall be subject to the strictest access control measures.*

The above-cited legislative provisions illustrate the explicit statutory obligation of audiovisual media service providers, the public service broadcaster included, to cooperate with the independent regulatory authority, namely the Radio Television and Digital Services Authority, and to support its effort to strengthen media literacy skills and competences as well as the statutory obligation of video sharing platform providers under the jurisdiction of Cyprus to provide for effective media literacy measures and tools and to support users' awareness on these measures and tools.

## ***2. Broader policy measures (non-legislative)***

Beyond legislative measures, a range of non-legislative policy initiatives exists, covering a broader framework and aimed at fostering media literacy skills across society. The Radio Television and Digital Services Authority (RTDSA) has publicly affirmed its commitment to the promotion of media literacy skills and competences and to supporting integration of media literacy into Formal and Informal Education. In this perspective, it collaborates with various organisations and institutions, actively engages in awareness-raising initiatives and campaigns beyond its regulatory mandate. Moreover, the Board of Directors (BoD) of the RTDSA has initiated the establishment of a Media Literacy Center. Emphasis is placed on developing critical thinking, source evaluation,

and understanding digital footprints, which constitute central pillars of RTDSA's work to advance Media Literacy.

### ***3. Assessment of Media Literacy measures implemented by VSPs***

With regard to media literacy measures implemented by VSPs these consist primarily of the following:

- RTA (Restricted To Adults) labeling through the site, which serves as an indication used by VSPs to inform users about the content of the platforms and that certain content is intended exclusively for adult audiences.
- Parental control guidance, which provides guidelines, information, and instructions for parental control and guidance and enables parents and guardians to manage access to content by minors.
- Terms and Conditions and Community Guidelines, which describe the operational framework of the platform, the nature of available content, and the standards of appropriate content consumption. These include also mechanisms enabling users to submit complaints concerning illegal content.

The assessment of media literacy measures implemented by VSPs under the jurisdiction of RTDSA is an ongoing evaluative process. Current assessment with respect to appropriateness and effectiveness of the implemented measures refers to limited and uneven appropriateness and effectiveness of the media literacy measures implemented by VSPs is observed. The existence of flagging and reporting mechanisms for illegal content and the implementation of procedures for examining such reports and complaints is acknowledged as foundational steps. Nonetheless, these are inadequate as they are predominately reactive, while their overall effectiveness is constrained. There is also no evidence of systematic media literacy programming or tools implemented or funded by VSPs. The measures currently in place are primarily about raising awareness on the nature of the content that VSPs host. There are additional concerns as to whether the average user is fully aware of and adequately skilled to understand and effectively utilise such mechanisms, e.g. flagging, reporting, and complaints-submission.

Substantial scope for improvement exists in order the measures to become more directly oriented toward enhancing netizens' critical thinking and strengthening their media literacy skills and competences. These measures may focus on more effective and easily accessible flagging mechanisms, and also on comprehensive and user-friendly Terms and Conditions and Community Guidelines. Such enhancements are anticipated to empower users and foster more critical and informed engagement with online content.

## **Part B: Organisational measures**

Article 33a of Directive EU2018/1808 on Audiovisual Media Services (AVMSD) stipulates that Member States shall promote and take measures for the development of media literacy skills. Article 30C of the Radio and Television Broadcasters Law 7(I)/1998 (as subsequently amended) confers upon the RTDSA the mandate to promote media literacy levels in Cyprus. Within this legislative context the RTDSA as the independent regulatory authority responsible for securing the compliance of audiovisual media service providers and of video-sharing platform providers with the applicable regulatory framework is designated as the competent and responsible authority for promoting and enhancing media literacy skills as well as for overseeing compliance with the relevant obligations imposed on these providers. Pursuant to article 30C(1) RTDSA shall promote and take measures for the development of media literacy skills. Such measures may include, *inter alia*, the development of educational and research programs and the design and implementation of educational and awareness-raising campaigns.

The RTDSA cooperates with numerous stakeholders to support media literacy-related actions and initiatives. The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, which is the educational institution under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth of Cyprus constitutes a key actor in the promotion of media literacy skills and competences, and a partner with which the RTDSA engages in sustained collaboration, in order to fulfill its media literacy-related mandate. Cooperation between the RTDSA and the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute focuses primarily on the delivery of educational programs to students and educators.

AEI Audiovisual Forum, a non-profit cultural organization, is another collaborator with which the RTDSA cooperates through the educational program “CINeDUCATION”. The program includes the participation of high school and university students in documentary production workshops by professionals in film industry with the aim of acquiring skills in the field of documentary film production.

The Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory (MedDMO), the regional hub of the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) covering Greece, Cyprus, and Malta is likewise a regular institutional partner of RTDSA. RTDSA and MedDMO cooperate in promoting media literacy skills and competences, with particular emphasis on addressing the various manifestations of information disorder.

Audiovisual media service providers and video sharing platform service providers under the jurisdiction of Cyprus and supervised by RTDSA are also long-standing collaborators and important stakeholders in the broader effort to advance media literacy skills and competences in Cyprus.

## **Part C: Public funding and other media literacy financing arrangements**

In Cyprus, public financial support to media literacy-related activities is primarily channeled through the annual budgets of the RTDSA and the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. It is important to underline that RTDSA is a self-funded authority and does not receive any annual State subsidy. Within its annual operational budget, the RTDSA allocates the amount of €50.000 for the planning and implementation of media literacy activities, while a substantial proportion of this amount is dedicated to the establishment and operation of the Media Literacy Educational Centre. It should also be mentioned that RTDSA officers contribute to the design and implementation of media literacy activities as part of their regular professional duties.

In addition, public financial support for media literacy activities is also provided through the annual budget of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. As an institution operating under the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute receives annual State funding and participates in the EU-funded Cyber Safety funded program, in which the RTDSA is a collaborative actor.

Furthermore, audiovisual media service providers contribute to media literacy efforts primarily through in-kind support – most notably by offering air-time without deriving financial profit – alongside their participation in public awareness campaigns and the offering of media literacy-related training for their staff.

At present, no formalised national mechanism specifically designed to attract private-sector investment in media literacy exists. Nevertheless, the RTDSA continues to examine opportunities to strengthen structured partnerships and collaborative projects consistent with the national media literacy objectives.

## **Part D: Engagement and awareness-raising activities, including media literacy curricula**

With the objective of enhancing media literacy levels in Cyprus and fostering individuals' critical understanding of and engagement with all forms of media content, RTDSA implements numerous measures and actions aimed at empowering citizens with media literacy skills and competencies required in the digital and converged media environment. This part of the report presents an overview of the most prominent and significant engagement and awareness-raising activities, including media literacy curricula.

### ***1. Experiential workshops and public speeches***

RTDS in collaboration with the Pedagogical Institute implements experiential workshops activities addressed to pupils of primary and secondary education, covering the following thematic areas:

- *Understanding the elements of advertisements*
- *Deconstructing gender stereotypes through an analysis of advertising*
- *Combating disinformation and fake news*
- *The role of Cyprus Radio Television Authority in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*
- *Evaluating News and Newsworthiness criteria*
- *Critical analysis of media content: 5 key steps to develop media literacy skills*
- *Reality TV/reality shows: do they really represent reality?*
- *Production of reportage and investigative journalism*
- *Conducting interesting and successful interviews*
- *How to spot fake news*
- *The ecosystem of the mass media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*
- *Individual human rights and mass media: how we protect individual human rights in mass media, including the social media and digital platforms*
- *The digital footprint and online reputation*
- *The construction of identity in and through using the social media*
- *Responsible Netizens: how we behave ethically and responsibly in the online environment*

These workshops are implemented nation-wide and eligibility for participation is expanded to all primary and secondary education establishments in Cyprus. The rationale underpinning this activity is the recognition that media literacy education contributes to the development of critical thinking skills and enables active and informed participation in media culture. The objective of this activity is to strengthen young people by equipping them with competencies essential to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media content.

Furthermore, upon invitation RTDSA Officers have delivered numerous public speeches primarily at universities. These presentations and speeches addressed the following key aspects of media literacy:

- Media Literacy: an essential competence in digital era and an important media regulation and policy objective.
- Regulation of Video Sharing Platforms by RTDSA.
- Media Literacy in Cyprus: regulatory provisions and best practices.

- Media Literacy for marginalised groups.
- The advancement of digital competencies within the framework of Media Literacy and the consequent implications for the governance and regulatory oversight of the audiovisual sector.
- Information disorder: Media, Audiences, State Institutions (conference participation).
- International Media Literacy Workshop: The role of regulatory authorities in combating gendered disinformation (conference participation).

RTDSA also actively participates in the “Cyprus Safer Internet Centre”, with the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute serving as the coordinator. This centre provides a wealth of resources, lesson plans, and training for educators, students, and parents, focusing on online safety, which is a fundamental aspect of media literacy.

## ***2. Online quizzes***

RTDSA created and published an online quiz titled *Playing online games with safety and security*. It is expected that by taking this quiz users will understand the need to protect their personal data and privacy and recognise the necessity to behave ethically and responsibly while playing online games. The quiz is available [here](#).<sup>5</sup>

## ***3. Educational program “CINeDUCATION”***

RTDSA supported the 6th and 7th rounds of the educational program “CINeDUCATION” during the school years 2022 – 2023 and 2023 - 2024, respectively, organized by AEI Audiovisual Forum, in collaboration with the UNESCO Partnership Schools Network (ASPnet) of Cyprus. The program took place within the framework of the annual Cyprus Archaeological, Ethnographic and Historical Film Festival.

More specifically, high school and university students participated in documentary production workshops (three, three-hour workshops for each team) conducted by professionals in the film industry (directors) with the aim of acquiring skills in the field of documentary film production. Participating teams then produced their own short (ten-minute) documentaries on topics of

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<sup>5</sup> Also available at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JQYCRV7>

archaeological, ethnographic, historical aspects of Cyprus and got hands-on experience on all stages of the production (choosing the topic, conducting the research, writing the script, shooting and editing of the documentaries).

RTDSA actively supported the program by sponsoring the three monetary prizes awarded to the three best productions of the high school teams. A Radio TV Officer of RTDSA participated in the jury.

#### ***4. Public Awareness Campaign***

RTDSA conducts and supports campaigns to inform the public about disinformation and the importance of verifying information from diverse sources. At this stage RTDSA, in collaboration with the Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory (MedDMO), is in the process of designing public awareness campaign on the dangers of disinformation and ways to combat it. The campaign involves the production of three videos that can be broadcast over audiovisual media service providers and uploaded over social media, as well as the production of three audios that can be broadcast over radio organizations.

#### ***5. Training the Professionals***

Acknowledging the critical importance of vocational training RTDSA organized and delivered training programs tailored to the needs of various professional groups.

##### **i. Media professionals and practitioners (journalists)**

Taking into consideration the pivotal role of vocational education and training in skills development especially for media professionals, the RTDSA in collaboration with the regional hub of EDMO, the MedDMO, organised specialized training sessions for media practitioners. In particular, three training programs were delivered covering fundamental aspects of media literacy with emphasis on identifying information disorder, utilizing tools to detect various types of information disorder, and applying fact-checking tools and methodologies. These trainings

were tailored to the needs of professional journalists in both, private and public service media as well as senior executives of the public service broadcaster.

## **ii. Media regulators and policy makers**

In light of the strategic importance of vocational training for all professionals operating across the broader media ecosystem the RTDSA in cooperation with MedDMO, delivered a specialized training programme addressed to Officers of the national regulatory authority for audiovisual and digital media services. This media literacy training aimed to equip participants with fundamental knowledge for identifying and addressing misinformation, disinformation, and fake news as well as for the effective use of fact-checking tools.

Furthermore, a dedicated 10-hour training programme was designed by a Media Literacy expert (University professor) and delivered to RTDSA Officers. This programme covered key thematic areas, including the conceptual framework of media literacy, the phenomenon of information disorder, the digital footprint and identity construction on social media and digital platforms. In addition, participants were provided practical guidance and methodological tools for the organization and delivery of media literacy seminars and workshops targeting students.

## **iii. Educators**

An online workshop targeting educators in primary and secondary education was co-organised by the RTDSA and the Pedagogical Institute. This workshop aimed to promote media literacy with particular emphasis on contemporary pedagogical approaches. The workshop was attended by over 500 participants, who, following the presentations engaged in a detailed and reflective exchange of opinions and ideas on the discussed topic.

## **iv. Specialised groups - Police**

RTDSA has a mandate to strengthen media literacy skills and competences across the entire population of Cyprus. Understanding the need to support not only individuals but also public institutions as well, a dedicated 2-day training programme on media literacy was delivered by an

RTDSA Officer to members of the Cyprus Police. Educating police officers in media literacy is essential, as it enables them to navigate the contemporary, complex media landscape and to communicate accurately with the public. This training programme was designed to enhance both the institutional engagement of the police and the individual capacity of policy officers to interact responsibly and effectively with journalists and the media. It addressed the multifaceted relationship the media and police, examining how this interaction can serve the public, safeguard police officers and promote and public trust.

### ***Part E: Evaluation measures and methods***

RTDSA considers the evaluation of media literacy initiatives and activities as a key component of its national strategy for promoting Media Literacy, however, it currently does not implement formal mechanisms to assess the outcomes or the impact of regional or national media literacy initiatives. The success of the various projects rests on the demand on behalf of stakeholders and interested parties to attend the different activities and workshops. Nevertheless, RTDSA acknowledges the significance of adopting and implementing impact assessment measures and intends to adopt such measures in the future. Current discussions recommended that the value of the various initiatives and activities, for instance the workshops can be assessed with activities that measure and evaluate the extent to which pupils can put their knowledge and skills to relevant use in various situations and in particular when navigating in the digital environment or playing online or video games.

### ***Part F: Additional information***

A Media Literacy Educational Centre is anticipated to become operational in the first quarter of 2026. Visitors of the Centre will have an opportunity to experience how media and audio content is produced.