



MEDIA LITERACY

COUNTRY REPORT: CYPRUS

Country Report submitted to the European Commission

For the purposes of Article 30C(4) of the Radio and Television Organizations Law 1998 to
2014

Prepared by Antigoni Themistokleous,
Radio-Television Officer
Cyprus Radio Television Authority
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1. Introductory Remarks – Regulatory Provisions

According to the Audio-Visual Media Services Directives of 2007 and 2013, Member States and particularly the independent regulatory authorities in broadcasting sector are required to launch initiatives and to develop a variety of programs to promote media literacy, to ensure high levels and to upgrade media literacy levels in the member states. This report presents the activities and the practices of the Cyprus Radio Television Authority (CRTA), conducted for the period of 2011 – 2014, in order to advance media literacy levels in the Republic of Cyprus. As the independent regulatory authority for broadcasting Cyprus Radio Television Authority has the mandate to design and coordinate the agenda for the enhancement of Media Literacy in the Republic of Cyprus.

• **Private Audio Visual Media Service Providers**

Article 30C of The Radio and Television Organizations Law of 1998 to 2014 refers to Media Literacy. In particular, the article provides the following:

“30C(1) The Authority shall, in collaboration with other relevant governmental, semi-governmental and private institutions, promote the design and the coordination of the development and implementation of programs (research, training/educational, information and others) to upgrade the levels of media literacy in the Republic.

30C(2) The audio-visual media service providers are required to participate in these efforts, on the basis of the design of the Authority, particularly in the dissemination of clear and user-friendly information to the public and to support awareness campaigns regarding, among other things, the production, promotion and distribution of information and creative content in the digital environment aiming for the responsible use of the internet in general, and (the responsible use) of the way search engines work and how to work better.

30C(3) For the purposes of the current article, the term "Media Literacy" means the ability to access, understand and critically evaluate the various aspects of media and their content, and the ability of expression in different forms of communication, especially through the new technologies.

30C(4) The Authority shall send a report as regards the application of subsection (1), to the European Commission, which shall be communicated to the Ministry of Interior and to the Ministry of Education and Culture, no later than 30 June 2011 and every three years thereafter.”

- Public Service Broadcaster

It is noteworthy that the same provisions are included in the regulation as regards the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC)¹. Article 18D of the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation Law, section 300A (as subsequently amended) provides as follows:

“18D. “The Foundation participates in the Media Literacy actions, coordinated by the Cyprus Radio Television Authority, particularly in the dissemination of clear, user-friendly information to citizens and in supporting, among others, the awareness campaigns on the production, promotion and distribution of information and creative content in digital environment towards the responsible use of the internet in general and the operation and optimum use of search engines.

For the purposes of this Article, the term "media literacy" means the ability to access, understand and critically evaluate the various aspects of mass media and mass media content, and the ability of expression in the different modes of communication, primarily through new technologies.”

The inclusion of the above-mentioned provisions in the Cyprus audio visual regulation reflects the obligation of Cyprus as a full member-state of the EU to incorporate the provisions of the European Directives in its national legislation, so that to proceed to harmonization with the EU Directives. Within this context, CRTA is the responsible organisation for coordinating projects and actions in order to promote and enhance Media Literacy levels among the population in the Republic of Cyprus.

¹ The Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC) is country's public service broadcaster. Its operation is partially monitored by the Cyprus Radio Television Authority (CRTA). In brief, CRTA 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.

2. Media Literacy in the context of the operation of the Cyprus Radio Television Authority (CRTA)

Media literacy project seeks to provide citizens all the necessary skills and competences and to prepare them in order to face the new media reality, which is both, digital and converged. The intention and the purpose of the activities of the CRTA as regards the media literacy policy is to empower citizens and to develop citizens' critical thinking and ability to evaluate the plethora of images and the multiple messages they receive on a daily basis.

In order for the public to develop deep critical thinking and to acquire self-defense mechanisms against harmful or destructive media material, certain skills and competences are required. This knowledge is acquired at a higher level among media literate citizens. To this extent it is believed that improving media literacy levels will enable citizens to promote critical thinking and support problem-solving capacity and to emphasize the importance of civic participation, of active citizenship and of intercultural dialogue of media users. In addition, media literacy policy seeks to facilitate individuals to develop skills and abilities, which are required in order to effectively and efficiently use information and communication technologies.

3. Aims and Objectives

The principal objectives of the broader initiative to enhance media literacy levels in the Republic of Cyprus are focused on:

- Increase awareness of the various forms of media messages experienced in everyday life.
- Development of critical approach towards media content; citizens need to be empowered to choose among multiple sources of information, of images and of advertisements, to evaluate each source and to critically reconstruct the information.
- Empowerment citizens to access the media and to create communication in various contexts and for various purposes.
- Development of requirements for access to media analysis and evaluation of their products as well as creation and production.
- Encouragement of active participation of individuals in media culture.

- Acquisition of the necessary skills and competences so that individuals are conscious consumers and producers of media content and well-informed citizens.

Scope of
the Project.

4. Scope of the Project:

Media literate individuals are expected to be well-educated and well-prepared to orient, to define and to direct the relationship between the media and society and to critically think the appropriateness of the media products they consume, to evaluate their quality and to decipher the complex messages they receive from all the mass media industry. In this light citizens will be informed and politically active instead of being pathetic and passively accept the media content. Citizens empowered with these qualities are able to select, to judge, to evaluate and to recompose the information disseminated through the mass media, while they are also enabled to proceed to effective use of the whole spectrum of media and communications in the exercise of their democratic rights and civil responsibilities

Target of
the Project.

5. Target of the Project:

Current project targets at educating the whole spectrum of the population. Particular actions target at students of all levels (pupils at primary and secondary schools but also university students). This social group is one of the most sensitive due to the fact that pupils' personality is still malleable. Hence, the project pays particular attention to educating this part of the population. However, it is important to emphasize that this does not mean that adults are not among the target groups of media literacy projects. Additional target groups are the various professional groups, such as journalists and the various social groups, such as the elders, the minorities or people living in the rural areas.

6. Initial Activities of the Cyprus Radio Television Authority (CRTA)

- The Authority sought to ensure yielding as much as possible creative, fruitful and productive results. To this perspective, the Board of Directors of CRTA decided to set up a group of experts (Media Literacy Committee) to support Authority's actions and to advise it regarding the various aspects of the policy on promoting media literacy levels in the Republic. The decision was taken on September 7th, 2011. The Committee was staffed mostly by Academics (Dr. Kostas Gouliamos, Dr. Costas Constantinides, Dr. Chrysanthos Chrysanthou, Dr. Vaia Doudaki). Also, a Member of the BOD of the CRTA (Mr. Titos Kolotas), the Director of the Authority (Mr. Neophytos Epameinondas), a Radio Television Officer (Ms. Antigoni Themistokleous) and the Community Media Coordinator of the Cyprus Community Media Centre (Mr. Michael Simopoulos) participated in the Committee.
- The Executive Chairman and the Director of the Authority had a meeting with the Minister of Education and Culture on December 1st, 2011 in order to inform him about the current activities and the purposes of the Media Literacy Committee. At the meeting, it was decided that Ms. Anastasia Economou, Head of Educational Technology Department at Cyprus Pedagogical Institute would participate in the Media Literacy Committee. In this perspective, the cooperation of the CRTA with the Ministry of Education and Culture and particularly with the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus, which runs under its auspices a number of activities regarding the advancement of media literacy levels among students, is developed according to the provisions of the audiovisual regulation, which enables cooperation of the Authority with various institutions.

7. Actions taken by the Media Literacy Committee

- Publication of a White Paper regarding Media Literacy: (working paper) due to the lack of a coordinated attempt to promote media literacy at all levels of the society, the publication of a paper which would constitute the basis for the development of the policy as regards the Media Literacy was assessed as helpful. In other words, this paper is a working paper, which guides and directs the practices for promoting and advancing media literacy levels in the Republic of Cyprus.

The Paper is published in the official website of the CRTA (www.crta.org.cy) and discusses the basic and fundamental elements regarding Media Literacy. It refers generally to media literacy policy, while it further deals with the definition of such a complex concept as media literacy. It also refers to a typology of the skills and competences to be developed in the framework of the wider project. Moreover, it presents the different perspectives of Media Literacy. Additionally, the Paper mentions the stakeholders to be involved in developing the policy and the activities in order to advance media literacy levels in Cyprus, the aims of the project and the requirements for satisfying these aims. The finally part of the Paper focuses particularly on Media Literacy situation in Cyprus.

- Full day conference: on the 10th October 2012, the CRTA and the Ministry of Education and Culture organized a full day educational conference regarding issues of Media Literacy in Europe and in Cyprus. Speeches were given by the Executive Chairman of the Authority, the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic and the Head of the EU Representation in Cyprus. For the purposes of the conference presentations were given by the Head of Educational Technology Department of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute², by three academics³, one researcher and journalist⁴ and by the project coordinator of the Cyprus Community Media Centre⁵. The list of participants included teachers of all levels, journalists, advertisers, member of the trade unions, civil servants, the Commissioner for Children's Right and officers from her

² Mrs. Anastasia Economou.

³ Dr. Christophorou Christophoros – Assistant Prof. University of Nicosia; Dr. Constantides Costas – Assistant Prof. University of Nicosia; Dr. Doudaki Vaia – Lecturer, Cyprus University of Technology.

⁴ Dr. Chrysanthos Chrysanthou.

⁵ Mr. Michalis Simopoulos.

Bureau, members of parents' unions. The conference intended to inform the various actors who are expected to be involved in the project and to have a key role for the successful implementation of the project and aimed for exchanging views, opinions and ideas on issues of media literacy.

8. Additional Activities done by the CRTA

- Educational films: The CRTA launched a campaign to inform citizens about the main regulatory provisions, including media literacy. To this extent, the Authority preceded, in cooperation with a private production company to the production of a series of 6 short films to be broadcast by TV channels. The films refer to various aspects and issues related with the media and media content – according to the relative regulation audiovisual stations should broadcast any material if this is required by the Authority. Especially for the purposes of implementing media literacy programs providers of audiovisual services should, according to the Law, cooperate with the Authority. The films were broadcast by all four private TV channels and the two public service broadcaster channels. Broadcast was scheduled during the prime time and family zone. The films are also available on line, on the official site of the Authority and also on You Tube.

There was an introductory spot, introducing the actors which remain the same in all the films. Additional films concern the watershed and the appropriateness of TV programs in terms of the warnings regarding the content and the age. There was also a film titled 'television is not an innocent game', which deals with the risks of TV, while a fifth one communicates contact details and information of the authority.

The sixth spot is unbreakably linked to media literacy. The concept of this particular film was decided both by the CRTA and the aforementioned Media Literacy Committee. It illustrates the threefold meaning of media literacy elucidating the aspects of *Access, Understanding* and *Production*. Critical thinking is inherent in understanding, particularly in conscious, mindful and meaningful understanding. This spot seeks to convey the message to the public that it should not perceive and should not consider that everything they watch in TV reflects reality.

Sophocles, the hero produces his own short film which shows a shark. Choosing a different music alternative the young boy changes the feelings created by the images. A more “thoughtful reading” of the film and of the shots and plans reveals the opportunities and the wide range of activities, which are available to individuals when using new media, which enable editing the material. The spot concludes by disseminating the message that what we finally watch on TV or see in various advertisements is not the initial material or the content originally collected but it is (almost always) stuff that has been subject to refinement.

In June 2014 the CRTA proceeded to the production to a new spot referring to the watershed, which during school holiday is at 22.00. This spot is also available on line (www.crta.org.cy).

- ✓ The Cyprus Radio Television Authority chose this practice in order to:
 - Inform the public about basic regulatory provisions, about the existence of the authority and citizens' right to lodge complaints.
 - Raise awareness among citizens that television is not an innocent game for children.
 - Convey the message that citizens need to think on and about media content.
- Educational visits: Ongoing visits to private and public educational establishments – primary schools, secondary schools, public and private universities. Speeches are given by the Director or Officers of the Cyprus Radio Television Authority in order to inform the audience about issues audiovisual regulation including matters of media literacy and concerns for the quality of media products, including the advertisements. Educational visits are mostly arranged upon request.

9. Establishment of a Media Literacy National Coordinating Agency/Committee:

Due to the complex environment of the media, the convergent technological reality and the significance of media literacy education the CTRA and the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute prepared a proposal to be submitted to the Council of Ministers (via the Minister of Education and Culture) concerning the establishment of a coordinating agency/committee, which will be responsible for preparing, implementing and monitoring a Strategic Plan regarding increase awareness and education of citizens about issues of Media Literacy. This committee will be in charge for coordinating all stakeholders involved in the project, developing relative action plan, preparing progress reviews and evaluating the implementation and the quality of the strategic plan. The Strategic Plan considers the various parameters of the issue, while it pays particularly attention on the beneficiaries of the implementation of media literacy schemes, the type and the form of the education on media literacy, the appropriate time and the stakeholders from whom media literacy education is provided.

10. Media Literacy Workshops

A further significant perspective of the practices and the activities adopted by the Cyprus Radio Television Authority as regards the advancement of media literacy levels in the Republic of Cyprus is directly related to the development of media literacy skills among students. This is a joint scheme, designed and applied by the CTRA and the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus. The scheme consists on delivering specialized workshops related to media literacy at all educational levels. For the purposes of this project, school life has been separated in four categories, as follows:

- Kindergarten to Level 3 of Primary school
- Level 4 to Level 6 of Primary school
- High school (Level 1 to Level 3)
- Lyceum (Level 1 to Level 3)

The project refers to the development of four different lesson plans/workshops, one for each of the above-mentioned categories. For the first group (Kindergarten to Level 3 of Primary school) it has been decided that the workshop is focused on advertisement and particularly on food

advertisement. According to the lesson plan, during the workshop subjects such as, the target audience of the advertisement, the marketing strategy adopted in the advertisements that are shown are discussed, while there is also an evaluative, creative activity.

The workshop of the second group (Level 4 to Level 6 of Primary school) refers to advertising on different media. It, thus, discusses issues of media comparison, while it also introduces the subject of online advertisement.

The main topic of the workshop to be delivered at the High school (Level 1 to Level 3) is the critical evaluation of the content disseminated through the various forms of mass media. It anticipates developing the critical thinking of students and enabling them to select reliable information and data, to check, verify and confirm the sources of the information in order to use the most reliable sources of information, while it also introduces the concept of responsible use of the internet and the online search engines.

Finally, the main topic of the workshop to be delivered at the Lyceum (Level 1 to Level 3) refers to online citizenship. It discusses issues such as the expansion of social media, the active involvement in online communities, the use of internet as a mode of participating in political society (such as, exchanging views, providing information, participating in a debate). This workshop seeks to create a new culture, especially among young students, about the responsible use of information technologies, enhancing the concept of digital citizenship.

The workshops are expected to be delivered from the next school year, namely, 2014-2015. The rationale behind this scheme is that Media literacy education contributes towards developing critical thinking and active participation in media culture. The intention is to give youth greater freedom by empowering them to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media content.

11. Forthcoming Activities of the Cyprus Radio Television Authority

Realizing that media literacy is not only intended to topics and matters concerning the children and the youth but that it should also engage the whole population, the CRTA plans additional activities. Within the framework of its role as an independent regulatory agency, the CRTA is currently working on product placement regulation. Particularly, it examines the current situation as regards the implementation of the regulation on product placement, and it intends to publish a leaflet clarifying and elucidating the policy of the Authority as regards the rules and the requirements for correct implementation of product placement. This action is directed towards advancing media literacy levels in the sector of media professionals.