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## **Digital Literacy, Media Literacy, Social Media and the Framework on competences for democratic culture.**

In Bulgaria only recently the question of developing programs on digital literacy, digital citizenship began to enter the educational debate. In the past only media literacy has been at least accepted as a concept (but not as an educational practice) but throughout the years there was neither teaching course developed or research realized in this field.

**According to Marin Marinov the competences in the digital era are:**

- Visual and information literacy;
- Digital and Media literacy;
- Multicultural literacy and awareness of the global processes;
- Adaptation competences and management of the complexity;
- Well organized critical thinking and effective communication competence;
- Team work, co-operative and interpersonal interactivity competence;
- Personal, social and civic responsibility;
- Interactive communication

According to the same author **digital literacy** means:

- Basic literacy – in this case command of several languages in order one to be successful at work and for the accomplishment of personal tasks and development of one's own capacity;.
- Scientific literacy – knowledge of the basic scientific concepts and processes;
- Economic literacy – a capacity to define the economic problems and to analyze the economic situation;

- Technological literacy - knowledge how technology works;
- Visual literacy - a competence for interpreting, using, assessing and creating images, videomaterials while using conventional means as well as 21 century media.
- Information literacy – competence to assess the information flowing from different media; participation in communication networks;
- Intercultural literacy – a competence to understand and to accept the similarities and the differences in mores, traditions, beliefs, values of one’s own culture and the culture of the others;
- Globalization literacy – recognizing exploring and understanding of global problems, interconnections.

As we could see the bigger part of the enumerated competences belongs to the competences described and analyzed in the Framework on Competences for Democratic Culture.

For the today’s analytical and critical thinking and research in the field and as a basis for the educational policy on media and information literacy serves the Paris Declaration on media and information literacy in the digital era.

“Continuous technological developments create and mediatise an ever-growing amount of content and information as well as new online spaces. They introduce new issues, challenges and possibilities as the Internet scenario goes mobile, ubiquitous and multiplatform. Individuals gain more control over their roles as media creators and critics, and not only as consumers. Social media and social network sites take on added relevance, as they serve as references to new forms of social interaction as well as new rights and participation models such as global citizenship in a digital age. These developments give rise to added opportunities and challenges to all stakeholders and practitioners to ensure citizens media and information literacy to navigate such enhanced flows of communication effectively.

Media and information literacy becomes increasingly necessary in the context of such developments in media as well as the economic, political and societal changes they entail. These changes include: media industries as big players; education policies that focus on economic competitiveness and efficiency; and the move towards "knowledge societies" as advanced forms of "information society". Such changes draw attention to the importance of not substituting media and information literacy with computer literacy or IT literacy in educational and policy contexts (e.g. curricula, funding, teacher training etc.). Such trends call for reconsideration of the context and competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) required by citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is important for stakeholders to make clear that it is neither useful nor efficient to promote a single literacy or single skill set without embedding it in the wider context of media and information literacy.

Very important for any educational policy are the „Recommendations to UNESCO, the European Commission and the multi-stakeholder community at large”.

To describe media and information literacy as a complex set of 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy practices; a means of enhancing inclusion, knowledge, skills and critical attitudes to information, culture and co-operation and a mechanism for all people to access, create and innovate.

To foster media and information literacy to address issues of access, privacy, safety and security and the ethical use of information, media and technology, in line with human rights standards; and to recognize the role of media and information literacy in relation to cultural diversity, intercultural and interreligious dialogue and the protection of citizens in countries with fragile social capital and weaker democratic political culture.

To advance content creation, across media and in multiple forms, as a key tool in the development of the digital economy, by setting up media labs in educational and cultural institutions.

To promote media and information literacy in relation to personal and professional lifelong development through collaboration between stakeholders in vocational education and training, higher education institutions, the research community, public and private media and civil sector organisations.

To support formal curriculum development for media and information literacy within schools.”

In Bulgaria since Sixties and Seventies have been started a discussion on the necessity of a new subject field connecting pedagogics and media. There were different proposals concerning the name of the subject – media literacy, media education and later digital competency. In the beginning media pedagogics was accepted but later media literacy has gained popularity.

Substantial element of media literacy is the active and creative use of the media by the young people. Important element of the development of the media education policies is the Bulgarian access to the European Union. There has a an urgent necessity our educational system to be adapted toward the generally accepted standards widely disseminated in EU.

We have to point out the role of the Ministry of the Education and Science which has prepared a lot of documents in the field of media education and as well supported the development of media education while organizing many educational events – seminars, conferences, and supported media education projects. Under the European Media Education Framework in the country have been developed some strategies concerning digital education and ICT development and educational materials.

The basic European and Bulgarian documents, programs and technological initiatives which cover as well media education are:

1. National Strategy concerning introduction of ICT into Bulgarian schools (2007).
2. National Program “ICT at school” (2013) г.
3. Handbook of Media Literacy, published by Council of Europe and translated into Bulgarian (Наръчник по интернет грамотност. Издателство на Съвета на Европа. 2013).
4. European Parliament Resolution from December 16/2008 concerning media literacy in the digital world. (2008/2129 (INI)).
5. National Longlife Learning Strategy 2015.
6. “Digital Bulgaria” National Program (2015) which aims at developing the information society in the country and to support the realization of the Digital European Program.

Nevertheless we have to point out that in none of the documents enumerated there is a place for special texts on the necessity of media and information literacy at school, in general education. The European documents treating the inclusion of media literacy into the curriculum have not been taken into account while elaborating educational policies.

**In 2016 have been approved new standards in civic education, intercultural education, environmental education and health education** with Ordinance from August 2016.

Article 4 of the Ordinance confirms the competences approach while formulating in a following way the objectives of civic, health, intercultural and environmental education.:

1. formation of an autonomous, active personality which:

a) understands and stands up the human values, the values of democracy and human rights, which participates in civic, political and social life in a responsible, creative and effective way for herself and for the society;

b) recognizes institution, structure and the procedures of the democratic society, the economic and political realities of the globalizing world;

c) respects the importance of every human person and its multiple identities, recognizes the right and the value of the diversity, accepts the equal standing of everyone in the common social space;

d) is aware and values her own cultural identity;

e) interacts with members of her family, community and with the other people in a constructive and a respectful way;

f) expresses her justified and critical civic position;

g) takes autonomous decisions about her own development, is initiative and has a capacity for goalsetting, to plan and to justify her actions;

h) being responsible for her own behavior and assesses the impact of her actions on her own life and on the other people;

i) selects adequate information, products and services in order to improve her health and support the healthy way of life for herself and for the people around her;

j) recognizes and follows the norms of environmental culture and behavior in order to preserve nature and to create sustainable environment;

κ) recognizes the mechanism of public institutions and of the civic society in order to apply shared responsibility for the preservation of the environment and expresses readiness to participate in public actions in that field;

1) could make connections between the different spheres of human life and to understand the causes of social inequalities, environmental and global challenges.

As we could see in civic education standards the place where we could expect digital literacy to be included as a key competence there is no mentioning of it notwithstanding the fact in the new Law of Education digital competence is pointed out in article 75 (1) “digital competency, social and civic competence; entrepreneurship; information culture etc”.

There is no official definition of media literacy. Very often media literacy is connected with digital culture and competences, which are only one of the components of media literacy. Most of the practitioners and researchers in the field of media literacy do accept the European definition “Media Literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms” or media literacy is the „ability to use media, to understand and critically assess different aspects of media and media content and the ability to realize communication in different contexts”.

Media and information literacy is an all-encompassing concept - including skills, knowledge and attitudes relating to terms such as, media literacy, information literacy, news literacy, advertising literacy, film literacy, Internet literacy, social network literacy, computer literacy, IT literacy, digital safety, privacy and personal cyber security, etc.

Media and information literacy comprises all media (digital and non-digital); literacy means the ability of sourcing, assessing, contributing to, and combining different kinds of media and information and using different media and information in different contexts/for different purposes.

Media and information literacy entails the ability to combine a range of skills and competencies in order to make use of information and media, including new

media developments, for achieving personal objectives. These objectives are strongly connected with individual growth (e.g. developmental tasks, identity construction, management of relationships, lifelong learning etc.) and societal challenges (organizing information, participation in public discourse, ethics and human rights, privacy, etc.).

Media and information literacy includes the following: *critical thinking and reflecting media and information systems* - including evaluation of information and media content; reflection upon political/economic influences on information and the media system; the centrality of information, media and technologies to development and good governance; dealing with risks and opportunities of new media developments, assessing right to use/connect and disconnect, being forgotten, privacy, etc. *using information, media and digital technology for individual and societal purpose* - including for self-expression, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, equality, and the right and the ability to make own decisions, enjoying media for leisure, learning/ working with media, etc. *handling of media* - Here there are types and levels of operational, creative and collaborative skills, such as the ability to produce content and information products and the use of ICT in this process etc. As access to information and participation are core principles of today's society, media and information literacy must be regarded as an enabler of human rights.

There is no special media literacy courses in the official curriculum in the field of general education. The accent is on ICT education which is introduced into 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and is a mandatory subject up to 10<sup>th</sup> grade of all general education settings.

As it has been mentioned the most important political document is the “National ICT Program” but its focus is basically on computer technologies and on access to Internet.

In the country is generally accepted the European idea of 8 key competences and it is reflected in the new Law of Preschool and School Education.

**Communicating in a mother tongue:** ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions both orally and in writing.

**Communicating in a foreign language:** as above, but includes mediation skills (i.e. summarising, paraphrasing, interpreting or translating) and intercultural understanding.

**Mathematical, scientific and technological competence:** sound mastery of numeracy, an understanding of the natural world and an ability to apply knowledge and technology to perceived human needs (such as medicine, transport or communication).

**Digital competence:** confident and critical usage of information and communications technology for work, leisure and communication.

**Learning to learn:** ability to effectively manage one's own learning, either individually or in groups.

**Social and civic competences:** ability to participate effectively and constructively in one's social and working life and engage in active and democratic participation, especially in increasingly diverse societies.

**Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship:** ability to turn ideas into action through creativity, innovation and risk taking as well as ability to plan and manage projects.

**Cultural awareness and expression:** ability to appreciate the creative importance of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media such as music, literature and visual and performing arts.

Nowadays media literacy is taught only at universities. At school level it depends whether some of the teachers would like to include some of the media literacy topics into their lectures or whether media literacy education is a part of internationally realized projects.

**If we consider digital literacy** we could say that one of the biggest myths nowadays is that the young people born in the digital epoch do acquire digital competences in somewhat natural way so they could deal with the challenges and could overcome the inherent risks while using new technologies and media.

A representative Bulgarian research on use of information and communication technologies by young people age 9-17 negates that myth. Yes, it is true that the children nowadays start using Internet at earlier age and do it more often and more intensively than their peers did several years ago. Without the developed competences as critical thinking, social skills and co-operation skills they face more risks while being online.

The Bulgarian children start using Internet at the age of 8 which is one year earlier than the research from 2010 had shown. Their first contacts with the online world could be dated about their seventh year - three years earlier than their peers in 2010.

About 97 % of the children are active Internet consumers which is a big growth since 2010 with 81%. What is important is that most of the students are online most of the time and there is no difference between school days and holidays. The students are better equipped – they do have 56% more laptops, 35% more smartphones and 57% tablets than their peers in 2010.

**More and more often Bulgarian students have to face harmful content in the Net.** About 15% of them do share that during the last year they have been scared or have seen something online, which is with 15% more than in 2010.

**Very upsetting is the fact that a big percentage of Bulgarian students do have public profiles in the Net and that percentage is the biggest in the 12-14 age group.** Around 87% of the children use social networks which is a significant growth in comparison with 54% in 2010. The percentage of the 9-11 age group using the Net has doubled which means that the limiting age approach in social

nets is not an effective one. About one third of the students do have accessed public profiles. It is important to point out that this percentage in the 12-14 age group is 40% which could be explained with the growing autonomy of the children at that age and with the diminishing parents' control.

**About one third of the students have been communicating with someone they have never met in the real world.** There is no difference between boys and girls but this percentage grows with the age. The most upsetting fact is that about 20% of the students have met the people they have been in contact in the Net. In comparison with 2010 this is a significant growth so it could be said that developing internet acquaintances into real one becomes a norm nowadays especially for the age group. The last conclusion is that we that the Framework appears in the right moment because as we could see the young people do live more and more in a digital world and there is no attempts or courses who could prepare them how to live and to behave in this new world and how to develop their citizenship in these new conditions.

**There is a growth of online and offline cyberbullying in the last six years.** About 30% of the students have been experiencing insults which is with about 10% more than in 2010. The victims of bullying are the same between boys and girls, but the percentage of victims grows with the age. Online cases of bullying show constant growth and the percentage is 38% of all cases of bullying in comparison of 25% in 2010. About 15% of the students do declare they have been insulted or hurt their peer during the last year. The relation victims- perpetrators is 2:1 which is very alarming because of the observed trend victims to turn into perpetrators.

**One of the most important conclusions of the research is that most time spend online doesn't promote digital or media literacy.** Using more and more Internet and navigating in the Net means that the students do acquire more technical skills how to use digital gadgets, how to save files, how to organize information they get online, how to create profiles in social nets etc. As well it could be observed that the young people do use more successfully variety of sites and digital communication platforms. Nevertheless the research shows deficits in critical thinking skills and social skills, deficits how to deal with untrue information or how to distinguish between true and false information, how to co-operate actively with the other Internet users. All these skills are fundamental for digital and media literacy and are necessary for functioning in the digital epoch.

Most of the students do spend their time in the Net watching videos, listening music, but do use very rarely Internet for the realization of some educational objectives. At the same time the students do declare clear awareness of the importance of social media and ICT for their personal development, but only 50% do use Internet for educational purposes.

**Bulgarian students while facing new information online do have difficulties to verify it.** About 70% of the students say that they learn something new every week but only half of them think that they could say whether this information is true or false. About 80% do say that they could use key words when looking for an information but only about 50% could define whether certain information is defended under authorship rights. **Bulgarian young people are rather passive users of Internet**, a fact which hinders the development of their social skills and creative capacity in this new digital reality. 66% respond that they use the social networks daily, but only 38% do share photos and texts. Only 23% had downloaded their videos in the last month, but 95% has visited sites for

videosharing. If we take into consideration the fact that about 80% assert they could make videos this discrepancy is not due because of the lack of skills.

This passive attitude doesn't give the young Bulgarians the opportunity to become part of co-operative networks. The online space is an enormous opportunity for starting communities of people working and aiming to accomplish something together. Only 44% of the students have been participating in online groups sharing common interests during the last month. This is half of the students visiting social networks and shows clearly that most of the young people are not motivated to work together toward the accomplishment of common goals. This is bad in the light that developing co-operative skills and competences is in the foundation of the so called digital citizenship.

In formal education field about one third of the students on regular basis receive tasks which require processing an information received from the Net and as well requiring online co-operation. Only but 20% of the students do use Internet once a week while preparing presentations; and only 30% use Internet while creating texts for school. 20% of the students use Internet once a week as a part of a group work. About 30% of the students confirm that they have never got any such tasks ( about 25% -for presentations; 20% - for texts and 30% - for group work). We could say that the minimal use of the Net for education purposes is one of the main reasons our students not to be able to discern true from false information and not to be active in search for online co-operation.

The National strategy for Introducing ICT in Bulgarian schools is important point for the educational policies in the field.

“In our contemporary globalizing and dynamic society the use and command of information and communication technologies is a substantial element of the functional literacy of everyone and a necessary condition for his personal and

professional growth and development. The basic objective of the Strategy is the effective use of modern information and network technologies in order to raise the quality of education, to enrich educational content and to introduce innovative educational technologies and methods in the learning process”.

The specific objectives stated in the Strategy are:

- Equipment of the schools with computers and their connection with Internet;
- Equal access to ICT for all students independently of their origin, social and cultural background, social and health status;
- Introduction of ICT into the curriculum and into the in-service teachers’ training programs.

The priorities based on the research in the educational system and on comparisons with other countries are:

- Computerization of the Bulgarian schools and ensuring an access to high-speed Internet.
- Ensuring the appropriate software consistent with the education content.
- Changes in the educational content and in the educational process;
- Training of the educators for introduction and use of information and communication technologies in the field of education;
- Elaboration of contemporary norms concerning the use of information and communication technologies in the educational process;
- Ongoing training of all educators aiming at acquiring basic computer skills and for using office applications.

- Specialized training for all teachers how to use information and computer technologies in teaching;
- Creation of an educational Internet portal and platforms for distance learning concerning all subject fields and cycles.

**The focus groups with students and with teachers** realized under the Council of Europe Project do only confirm the main points of our analysis of the current situation. The young people are simply in the Net, this is more and more the way they live and they do enter this digital world without any preparation, the process of digital socialization is simply missing. They learn how to live in the net, how to surf by themselves and they do develop some competencies often unconsciously, without any conscious learning and without reflection. Their digital, social media literacy is like the literacy of some people who occasionally being in a new environment learn the language in order to survive and to be able to function at a very primitive level in the community. The young people would like to develop their digital literacy, they suspect that the learning process and the education as a whole should become digitalized and even they do express expectations in this direction – but the practice shows that this doesn't happen.

The teachers, the educators are less digitally literate than their students and they should not perceive the education as a digitalized one, they do not know how to communicate with their students and the young people, not to talk about the possibility to become their leaders in this new digital world

And this happens at very basic level not to talk that the teachers have no idea how to help young people to develop digital citizenship or how to use social media in this direction. Lack of educational policy, lack of educational standards, lack of putting these problems to become the nucleus of the educational debate on transformation of education, on the necessary new concept of competencies for helping young people to function in the digital world, on the idea of emerging digital citizenship - all this influences teachers professional development and teacher educational philosophy and as well.