



The Civil Society Facility, Media Freedom and Accountability Programme,
EuropeAid/134613/C/ACT/MULTI

Media Literacy and Education needs of journalists and the public in Serbia



This project is funded by
The European Union



A project implemented by the
Center for Independent Journalism



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Dejan Kožul, journalist and researcher (Serbia)



This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents are the sole responsibility of the Center for Independent Journalism and its partners and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the EU Executive Summary

The concept of media literacy is being recognized in Serbia as part of the process of accession to the European Union. The awareness for the urgent need of promotion of media literacy in Serbia

has 2 major driver. One is structural and related to the political and economic tails of the past that are reflecting in the economic crisis situation (the disintegration of the state, transition, poverty, great influence of media in the society, and a significant influence of political and economic structures in the media, a lagging education system, etc.). It is the line where requirements for democratisation and strengthening of the civil society emerged. This context is strongly connected with EU accession process. The other context is technological and related to a changing media environment fostered by rapid development and penetration of new communication technologies and digitization that encouraged new research projects in media studies, cultural studies, audience studies and the growing recognition of the broader social needs and rights of children. ¹

Media Landscape

According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia on the use of ICT in 2015, 90.3 % of the households have a mobile phone, 99.3% have a TV, 64.4% have a computer. A total of 71.1% of the households in urban area have a computer compared to 53.9% in the rural regions. A total of 63.8% of the households in the Republic of Serbia have Internet, a 1% rise year-on-year and 8.0% up compared to 2013.

80.1% of the households use a personal computer to access Internet, 67.9% use mobile phones, while 55.8% use laptops. Over 2.8 million use a computer every day or almost every day. Over 5 use a mobile phone.

97.4% of the Internet population aged 16-24 have social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter). 62.3% access Internet to use online media.

The Bureau of Social Research (BIRODI) conducted a survey called "Media Literacy" within the framework of the project "Campaign for media literacy". The research covered a sample of 3,000 people, comprised of high school students, professors of civil society education classes, journalists and students in journalism. The research was conducted in 58 high schools in 15 cities. The sample included 291 journalists, 133 professors of civil education, 350 journalism students and 2,453 high school students.

60% of the high school students said they learn and discuss media influence in the civil society education classes, almost 50 % pointed out classes of sociology, about 20% says psychology classes, 17.5% in philosophy classes and 9.4% said did not had a chance to discuss media influence.

Only 7.4% of the surveyed do not use Facebook and 5.1% do not use social networks at all. Internet is used for information purposes by 60.4 % as 36.3% use social networks to get informed, 24.5% use TV.

Internet was rated as the media with biggest influence.

¹ https://www.academia.edu/8616503/Media_and_Information_Literacy_Policies_in_Serbia_2013

A total of 1,725 media sector companies are registered with Serbian Business Registry Agency of which:

- Daily, weekly, monthly newspaper - 811
- TV – 185
- Radio - 294
- Internet portals - 260
- News agencies - 23
- Other - 137

Government Policy on Media Literacy

Since 2010 media literacy is mapped as an important subject in media studies supported by EU Delegation in Serbia. This study was part of the Strategy for the Development of the Public Information System in the Republic of Serbia until 2016. According the strategy “the Republic of Serbia shall encourage the development of media literacy by developing the citizens’ individual capacities to use, understand and critically evaluate the various aspects of media outlets and media content, as well as their social skills to competently use information and communication services”, says Maja Zaric, Advisor in the Ministry of Culture and Media.

Maja Zaric, stated that the Ministry is implementing the strategy of public information system development which stipulates a possibility to introduce media literacy projects into the education system.

She explained that certain laws already have the notion of media literacy already incorporated therein, such as the Law on Primary Education and Upbringing, Law on Adult Education, Law on Public Information and Media, and Law on Public Media Services.

“Media literacy is the ability of citizens to access media, to understand them, to create media contents and to value them in critical way”, said Zarić. She also emphasised that the Ministry and the European Union Delegation in Serbia are implementing project “If you have something to say – say it”, which includes activities related to education of secondary school students and their professors about media literacy.²

In 2015 as part of a workshop organised by the Strengthening Media Freedom project team on how to support and ensure that public interest is fully taken into account in the daily operation of media organisations, Maja Zarić of the Ministry of Culture and Information emphasized the importance of the involvement of all stakeholders in the process of promoting media and digital literacy in the context of the significance of media literacy and education for the empowerment of citizens to make informed decisions regarding their media consumption.³

² About media literacy at Belgrade Book Fair <http://www.mediafreedom.rs/about-media-literacy-at-belgradebook-fair/?lang=en>

Media literacy as a term for the first time entered in some official document as Paragraphs 6 and 9 in the Strategy for the Development of the Public Information System in the Republic of Serbia until 2016. Second document is in Strategy for Education Development in Serbia 2020. Media Literacy is not explicitly mentioned but gives conditions for media literacy development.

4

Media literacy is also part of Law on Public Information and Media where in Paragraph II (PUBLIC INTEREST IN PUBLIC INFORMATION) and article 15 is mentioned (Supporting the production of media content with a view to protecting and developing human rights and democracy, improving a constitutional state and a welfare state, free developing of character and protecting children and youth, developing cultural and artistic creativity, developing education including media literacy as part of education system, developing science, sports and physical culture and protecting environment and human health).

Regulatory Authority of Electronic Media (REM), as a regulatory body, suggested a strategy for developing radio and audio-visual media services. There is one paragraph about media literacy and the approaches to media's content. This strategy gives REM new competence and obligations.

The Ministry of Culture, Information and Information Society used the budget funds intended for media literacy, exclusively for the co-funding projects that contribute to the development of media literacy, the introduction of new information and communication technologies and which contribute significantly to information and education of children and youth in this domain. Mainly one-year projects of NGOs, local media and some youth and student organizations were financially supported.

Maja Zaric, from the Ministry of Culture and Media told that they are preparing regional project about media literacy, funded by IPA. Serbia got its new government in mid-August 2016 and this project would depend on the new leadership decisions.

USAID financed Media coalition project www.medijskapismenost.net but they were not interested in continuing it.

EU Delegation and Ministry of culture supported pilot campaign for the high school pupils called "If you have something to say – say it". Goals of this campaign were strengthening media freedom and freedom of expression by promoting regulatory frame and professional standards in the field of media and media literacy. ⁵

³ Public Interest in Media Services Discussed at Workshop in Belgrade, <http://www.mediafreedom.rs/publicinterest-in-media-services-discussed-at-workshop-in-belgrade/?lang=en>

⁴ https://www.academia.edu/13660958/Medijska_pismenost_-_preduvjet_za_odgovorne_medije ⁵ www.recinam.rs

Regulatory Authority of Electronic Media (REM) regulates electronic Medias, regulates the field of broadcasting media, defines criteria to media, monitors their work and warns broadcasters if they do not abide by the law and the general legally binding instructions. At the initiative of UNICEF and the Association of Journalists of Serbia (UNS), RRA established criteria for content rating which includes a media literacy campaign. ³

The Press Council is an independent, self-regulatory body that brings together publishers, owners of print and online media, news agencies and media professionals. It has been established for monitoring the observance of the Journalist's Code of Ethics, solving complaints made by individuals and institutions related to media content. The Press Council is also authorized to mediate between aggrieved individuals, institutions and editorial staff, and to pronounce public warnings in cases when determined that the violation of ethical standards as defined by the Journalist's Code of Ethics has occurred. The Press Council is engaged in the education of media professional to act in accordance with the Journalist's Code of Ethics and works to strengthen the role of media in Serbia. In the Managing Board of the Council are three representatives of the Media Association, one representative of the Local Press and two representatives of Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia and the Serbian Association of Journalists. ⁴

Stevan Pajovic, REM, about the REM's role: There is a trend that content rating focus is more questions of self regulation then regulation. So, the Medias organizing inside control of the content and that's how they protect minors. That means that they need to hire trained stuff able to categorize program based on the criteria prescribed by REM in The Regulations of Protection of Minors in a Converged Media Environment ("Sl.glasnik RS", br. 25/15).

This kind of models exists in Serbian media when it comes to minors but I guess that media literacy will be on media daily agenda.

Regulatory Authority of Electronic Media (REM), as a regulatory body, suggested a strategy for developing radio and audio-visual media services. There is a one paragraph about media literacy and the approaching ways to media's content. This strategy gives REM new competence and obligations. One of the obligations is analyzing media market, analyzing the needs of the media consumers, supporting professionalism and media employee's education.

How this system of criteria was discussed at a roundtable organised in Belgrade by UNICEF in Serbia, the Association of Journalists of Serbia (UNS) and the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM). The takeaway of the discussion was that the regulations in the area of protection

³ www.recinam.rs; The whole campaign is visible at the web site: <http://www.tvoznake.rs/>

⁴ <http://www.savetzastampu.rs/english/>

of children from inappropriate television content are not being adhered to, and that it is necessary that the media immediately start implementing the Guidelines on Protection of Minors adopted last year, but also that the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media, as the authority that adopted this bylaw, should start punishing more severely those who are violating it, so that Serbia's media system does not violate the rights of children in practice. ⁵

According to Tamara Skrozza, Media Council, those two bodies has completely different role like different status. REM is state institution with huge budget, strongly influenced by daily politics and hardly compromised during those 13 years of existence.

REM stands behind scandalous decisions. They did not react when some televisions decided to change their concept, they do not react after violations during the electoral campaign...So huge powers but used selectively.

Media Council is a self regulatory body. As Press Complaints Commission member I can say that our decisions are not influenced by any side. Our reputation comes from devotion to ethical standards and principals. That's how this body sets the standards.

Perica Gunjic, editor at the website Cenzolovka: This is an informative website. Their focus is on freedom of press.

REM is politically controlled body with politically controlled employees. There is no reaction at everyday's journalist's standards violation, including everyday's reality programs which even promotes violence over women.

Media Council much more seriously takes their responsibility. It's a place which had some bad decisions when it comes to Press Complaints Commission but it's also a place where you can debate about important journalistic problems and a place where journalism students could teach about ethics, more than in their own faculties.

There is another issue of medias not taking Media Council decisions seriously. They keep crushing journalistic codex but this is an institution which could and should have much bigger role in media regulations if it ever happens.

Media Education

Media education is not explicitly presented as a tool to address contemporary crises in educational system in Serbia. It is rather presented as a tool for the equipment of civil society and children with new skills (related to privacy and internet safety, hate speech and responsibility) and critical thinking about media (primarily news) content.

⁵ http://www.unicef.org/serbia/media_28704.html

In the strategic document on the development of the education system, media literacy has been recognized as a wider concept of functional literacy, in accordance with the eight competences presented in the Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competencies for lifelong learning. Competencies related to media literacy and fostered through Education Development Strategy in the Republic of Serbia until 2020 are focused on active learning, critical thinking, digital literacy, mentorship in the classroom, civic education, promotion of participation etc., systematically through all school subjects. Media education is indirectly a part of the reform that included other measures, such as inclusive education, introduction of civic education (and religious education as an alternative), introduction of professional development and training programmes for teachers etc., all related to the raising civil (and media) consciousness of teachers and students. But since there is no formal media education – that is, media education as a separate subject or explicitly involved across the curriculum - in the school system (both primary and secondary school levels.

From 2006 to 2015, Novi Sad School of Journalism was among the first to implement professional development seminar for teachers and professors called “Journalism Workshop – Media literacy”, accredited by the Institute for Advancement of Education and Upbringing, Republic of Serbia. The seminar has been attended by more than 300 teachers and professors of both elementary and high schools, who were trained to educate children about media literacy through the subject that they already teach in school (above all: native language, civic education, computer science, sociology, arts, etc).

In 2015, Novi Sad School of Journalism recognized the need for a broader application of media in education. The new program “Media and teaching – media literacy” encourages the introduction of interactive teaching methods, and the development of competencies for analysis and application of media for educational purposes.

This program, accredited by the Institute for Advancement of Education and Upbringing, has the task to educate teachers and professors for application of mass media content in the classroom and within extracurricular activities (school media), as well as advance their selective and critical thinking of media content and develop the art of communication within mass culture.⁶

Civil sector offers unformal education, specially the initiative from socalled „Media coalition“ made by several different journalists association (Journalists Association of Serbia, Independent Journalists Association of Serbia, Independent Journalists Association of Vojvodina, Association of Independent Electronic Media, Local Press). This project was called the same as the web address www.medijskapismenost.net. The project included media literacy training for professors of the subject called Civil Education for the high school profesors. Web site became sort of resurs center for the profesors where they could take for free ideas for their lecture.

⁶ http://www.novinarska-skola.org.rs/sr/?page_id=2351&lang=en

Since 1994/1995, state university faculties for teachers' education have introduced mandatory subjects dealing with mass communications and optional subjects in the fields of film and television culture. Media literacy was introduced in 2005 as an optional course at The Teacher Training Faculty, University of Belgrade. About 130 study program include courses in the fields of media education or education for media in universities, faculties and colleges in Serbia. They can be divided into two groups.

The first group are those developed for education of experts and professionals in the fields of media and new media technologies.

This report didn't focus on: a) faculties that include courses and study program in computer sciences, ICT and programming; b) faculties of arts, including studies in film, music and visual arts, where media are incorporated both in terms of production and analysis; c) faculties dedicated to education of media professionals and journalists, where media production and understanding is also included in the curricula. It is, however, important to stress that these studies are important for media education on many levels, being that they produce experts that could become crucial actors in the development of media education awareness and policies. Also, among these there are courses such as Media Culture, Media Ethics, The Philosophy of Media, Information-Communication Systems, Sociology of Media, Communications, etc., but media education itself does not exist as a separate subject. All these program and courses, however, presumably develop a certain level of relevant literacies with their students. It is interesting, though, to compare state and private universities, where private ones insist mostly on media production fields (journalism and arts, for example), while state universities still dominate in the fields of ICT and Computer Sciences in general.

The second group consists of study program developed for education experts and teachers. There are 47 (as counted according to available data) study program whose curricula include optional or mandatory media courses; of those, 26 are in the state, and 21 in the private universities and colleges dedicated to education of educators, preschool and primary school teachers. It is evident that the majority of these courses are dealing with implementation of education technologies and ICT or audio-visual technologies and media in school curricula. There are also different courses that include lectures about media among other things, not being strictly focused on them. Also, there are more of bachelor degree level courses than those on master degree level, and, additionally, majority of these are optional.

Only 15 program offer courses directly or explicitly related to critical studies of media or media literacy; 11 of those in the state, and 4 in the private faculties (the number of courses themselves is smaller, because a single course is often offered on several study programs). Of these, only three have mandatory courses related to media education. For instance, The Teacher Training Faculty in Belgrade has a mandatory course Education for the Media that is offered at the Bachelor Degree study program for teachers. The Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade has a mandatory course Media and Education offered on the fourth year of Bachelor Degree Program of Pedagogy. The Faculty of Education in Sombor offers a mandatory course Media Culture at the bachelor degree level of both studies for School Librarians and Media Designer in Education. The

Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad has a Master`s degree optional course Media Pedagogy offered for students of Pedagogy. The Faculty of Education in Jagodina offers optional courses in Media Literacy for both preschool educators and primary school teachers at the bachelor`s degree level. The Teacher Training faculty of Uzice has optional courses Mass Communication and Film and TV Culture for preschool educators and primary school teachers, both on a bachelor`s degree level. The Faculty of Philosophy in Nis has a master`s degree level optional course Media Pedagogy.

Regarding private colleges, The Preschool Teacher Training College in Krusevac has an optional course Media Culture offered to preschool teachers at the bachelor degree level. The Preschool Teacher Training College in Pirot offers a course Child in Media Space for the same study profile. The Preschool Teacher Training College in Sabac has a course Media and Visual Culture offered optionally on two study programs, for preschool teachers and managers in preschool education.

It is evident that there are various study programs and courses that have a possibility of further assisting the development of media education and awareness of the importance of these issues. Their presence inform of a growing interest for media and importance of studying them on different levels and faculties. However, there is a lack of information that could help evaluate the impact of these courses on educational processes, in both students` level of competences attained in these courses and, when concerning education professionals, the teaching process itself.

Simona Zikic, Faculty for Media and Communications "Singidunum": In the new media era media literacy means ability to read, understand and "write" audiovisual information in different technological and culturally context. This era needs different literacy, not just language, speech and writing, but other symbolic system which could help us to experience and to understand better modern man. Therefore all programs at our Faculty supports media literacy concept because this is one of our mission not just related to students but also to wider public.

Teaching resources and materials are provided by NGO and private sector, mostly as a result from specific project activities.

In 1997, the publishing house Clio opened its Multimedia edition. Within the framework of Multimedia, important books have been translated, but it also opened the way for a domestic production of knowledge. It is still the only publishing house that has profiled and developed a continuous and separate media edition. Other publishers occasionally publish some media titles. Five years ago, in cooperation with NGO Library Plus (Biblioteka Plus), Clio also started the project Internest - Transforming School Libraries for high schools, in which teachers and students make multimedia contents, while managing book contents and learning about information and media literacy (<http://www.internest.rs/>).

Zoran Hamovic, Clio editor: 1996 we have translated and published Francis Balle`s book "Mandarin et marchand", translated as a "The Power of Media". We realized that there is no

possibility to teach and learn about history, critics and media theory. It was necessary to bring literature which could demystification Medias, which could help us to control the Medias and not to become manipulation victims. Our goal was to prepare good literature for media studies, for university and high school teachers and students and finally for all media professionals. We didn't get much of support from our ministries. Ministry of Culture supported our two projects and from Ministry of Education we got only morally support. On a long term this support was missing. Even if they support some there is no long term idea.

"Interest" project was recognized only by Open Society Fund. If it was not for them this project would not have last long. They understood well the importance of this project and the one who were suppose not just to recognize this kind of projects, but also to help, are not capable to understand it. We advocated for educational reform offering model for research and later also for use.

There are also handbooks for teachers in Civic Education made by NGO Civic Initiatives, which include some areas and issues of media education. Publishing house Creative Centre (Kreativni centar) publishes books for young children and primary school children about film and computer sciences. Microsoft Office in Serbia provides education workshops and seminars for teachers and students on digital literacy.

The Novi Sad School of Journalism (NSSJ) provides trainings and materials on minority languages. NSSJ has published several publications for media literacy coaches: The Functioning of the Local Television, Introduction to TV Journalism, Journalism Practicum and Churches, Religious Communities, Media and Democracy. This NGO has its own library with over 2,000 titles in the field of media literacy and literacy for Democracy, which is available to all project participants, especially educators who come to the certified trainings in NSSJ. This is the only specialized library for media in Vojvodina open to the public.

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Civil Education is the only subject which deals with media literacy in primary and high schools. Jelena Matić is a high school teacher of the Civil Education: Professional literature is too old and for a long time I don't use it at all. I make my own workshops analyzing media material with the students. Deconstruction of media policies and messages, analyzing political propaganda and campaigns is something we try to do very often. Since I am a sociologist that's the perspective I take when analyzing media messages. I could get a little help from some journalist, researcher which could give us his perspective from the professional point of view. I got a lot of help from IJAS and the website of Media Coalition www.medijskapismenost.net. Useful articles but the whole project should be minimized so that they can be useful for our students, so that they could understand it better.

Tatjana Ljubic, Media Literacy Consultant and Trainer was one of the trainers in the Media Coalition project: Students teach about media literacy in the fourth grade in high schools. That's too late and also it covers only the ones who have chosen Civil Education as a subject. We should create an education system where media literacy will be an essential part of this system. That means formal education from the earliest ages, from kindergarten.

Media literacy is much more present in the informal education. Since this is not a part of the formal system it covers just a small number of the citizens. But we shouldn't ignore those initiatives such as the initiative by Media Coalition supported by USAID in Serbia. With different activities, trainings for students and professors, with the campaign "Don't let be spined" and the webpage www.medijskapismenost.net they raised the question of media literacy at a higher level. It became more visible.

There is a need for media literacy in a primary school, specially at the first three grades. In the first grade almost every topic (discrimination, stereotypes, violence, identity, roomers...) could be illustrated. This is another value to those topics which could help to raise media literacy with better understanding.

The same goes in the second grade with the topics of kid's rights (comparing with this issue in the countries in the Balkans, responsibility of the state and grownups...).

In the third grade the chances to build skills and knowledge which makes someone media literate are even bigger with covering topics which are important for the quality of civil society, the role of the governance.

Unfortunately, there is no concrete research and it is not known what teachers really do with this knowledge, knowing that with this kind of access they could give more value to their own lessons.

Journalism Quality and Standards

A number of professional organisations have been working for the development of the quality of journalism.

The Journalists' Association of Serbia (JAS) is the largest and the most significant association of professional journalists in Serbia and a full-fledged member of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). JAS was established on 22 December 1881. Today, it has 3,000 active members. The Association's objectives include: promotion of Serbian journalism; - protection of free opinion and expression; - protection of journalists and interests of the profession; - strengthening of journalists' solidarity and assistance to the colleagues under threat.

Independent Journalist's Association of Serbia (IJAS) is established on 26th of March 1994 as a professional organization by journalists unsatisfied with the work of JAS. Today, IJAS has more than 3,300 members. Basic goals are: freedom of press, pluralist media, improving of professional and ethic standards, protection of rights and journalistic interests, including work and legal protection, cooperation between journalists and journalists association in the country and abroad.

Independent Journalists Association of Vojvodina (IJAV) is established on 17th of January 1990. IJAV mission is developing of professional journalism, protecting the rights and journalist's interests and values of civil society.

Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM) was founded in 1993, by a group of several media outlets - Radio B92 and NTV Studio B from Belgrade, Radio Boom 93 from Pozarevac, Radio Antena M from Podgorica, Radio Bajina Basta, Radio Smederevo and Radio Cetinje from Cetinje. At the time, their goal was to unite existing isolated media as the first step towards breaking the state-controlled media's monopoly. Today, ANEM is the largest association of electronic media in Serbia, dedicated to the improvement of conditions for media development and freedom of expression, as well as protection of interests of its members.

Association of Online Media is a new established association. Their goal is development and ethic standard's promotion and making more important the role of online Medias in the democratization of the society.

In 2006 JAS and IJAS adopted the Code of Ethics as an ethical standard of the professional conduct for journalists. The duty of journalists is to follow the professional and ethical principles contained in the Code of Ethics, and to resist pressures to violate them. The Code of Ethics recommends solidarity with colleagues when the standards of professional conduct for journalists are threatened. Both editors and publishers are responsible for implementation of this Code of Ethics.

Press Council has received 109 complaints in 2015 and 80 in 2014 as well as 60 cases of Journalist's Code violation. Most of violations were because of violations in Truthfulness in Reporting (35). There were 20 cases of violations in case of discrimination and hate speech, 17 cases of copyright infringement. Violations of ethical principles were registered 14 times as in the most of these cases media have violated several paragraphs of the Journalist's Code.

Professional Development and Specialisation

Tomislav Markovic, editor at www.e-novine.com: There is no media market in Serbia, there is only monopoly. When it comes to expectations, editors and media owners expect from students and future journalists to be in obedience, not to think with their own heads and not to interfere in their own jobs.

PERica Gunjic, Cenzolovka: Most of the editors are just an extended arm of the owner or main editor. They are responsible for censorship and self-censorship. That's the most important thing that young journalist can learn at the commercial Medias – self-censorship and finding interesting topics for advertisers. There is no public interest, the only interest is to make satisfied political and advertise bosses.

Svetlana Lukic, Pescanik: Nationalistic terror and the terror of the war politics is just replaced with market terror. It looks different but those are all mechanism for Medias controlling. Most of them lives directly or indirectly with the help of public money and journalists know that they know who feeds them and therefore even the media literacy one acts the opposite.

Insights & Recommendations

Media literacy education is a must and necessary as well as the knowledge about new media and social networks. Overall not enough attention is put on media literacy in the school. There is a need of wider awareness about media literacy and how society can benefit from it.

The quality of media and journalism is deteriorating with media being unable to reverse the trend itself. There is a need to raise the awareness among the media professionals about the consumer power (readers) and their own importance for the development of the civil society. Media should be included as a partner in the process of media literacy education and the cooperation between the industry and the universities should be re-enforced.