



Recommendation 1466 (2000)¹

Media education

Parliamentary Assembly

1. With the advent of the information society, the individual of today lives immersed in a world of media messages. Seemingly, there are no limits to the amount of information available.
2. However, new challenges are arising. Firstly, the new media offer countless sources of information and in an unprecedented way allow anyone to send messages out into the public space. It is becoming increasingly difficult to orient oneself in the huge mass of information. Problems derive not merely from the sheer mass, but from the very nature of communications. Media reality is not the “real” reality. But, in a world dominated by media culture, the boundaries between fact and fiction often become blurred.
3. For many children and young people, modern media and especially the Internet are more than just a means of learning about the world. They are their world, their “virtual reality”, where everything, the best and the worst, can be done and undone. Young people often are much more eager than adults to handle new technologies and are more at ease with them, whilst their discerning capacities and their ability to make value-based judgements are not yet well developed.
4. Teachers and parents are often helpless when trying to reconcile their own living and professional experience with the media experience of their children. Many adults find it increasingly difficult to cope with the pervasive change brought about by modern communications.
5. On a broader scale, the media, by their nature, are capable of influencing attitudes and behaviour in society. There is enough evidence in Europe that free and independent media are a real power in promoting democratic change, while in the hands of totalitarian forces they can become tools for inciting ethnic hatred and imposing stereotypes. It is also often claimed that there is a strong link between the increase in violence in society and the violent images conveyed by television, the Internet or computer games.
6. Globalisation and media convergence, along with all the formidable possibilities that they offer, also give rise to new concerns: the overflow of information; uniformisation caused by the unequivocal dominance of one language and one culture over the new media; and increasing commercialisation. There is also a serious risk of a new form of social exclusion for those who cannot communicate through the media and/or are unable to assess its content critically.
7. European democracies have many tools at their disposal to respond to the challenges posed by this changing society. The present situation, however, shows that there is an urgent need also to develop more decisive and radical educational measures promoting active, critical and discerning use of the media: in other words, developing media education.
8. Media education can be defined as teaching practices which aim to develop media competence, understood as a critical and discerning attitude towards the media in order to form well-balanced citizens, capable of making their own judgements on the basis of the available information. It enables them to access the necessary information, to analyse it and be able to identify the economic, political, social and/or cultural interests that lie behind it. Media education teaches individuals to interpret and produce messages, to select the most appropriate media for communicating and, eventually, to have a greater say in the media offer and output.

1. Assembly debate on 27 June 2000 (19th Sitting) (see [Doc. 8753](#), report of the Committee on Culture and Education, rapporteur: Mrs Isohookana-Asunmaa). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 June 2000 (19th Sitting).



9. Media education allows people to exercise their right to freedom of expression and right to information. It is not only beneficial for their personal development, but also enhances participation and interactivity in society. In this sense it prepares them for democratic citizenship and political awareness.

10. Although media education is part of the curriculum in several European countries, its practical application is still problematic, even as far as the traditional media are concerned. Qualified teachers and teaching material are the basic elements in media education and therefore constant attention should be paid to both initial and continuing teacher education. Uncertainty also persists as to the place media education should have in the curriculum, the methodology of teaching, the objectives pursued and the evaluation of the results. Furthermore, most schools have not yet adapted to an educational pattern where both pupils and teachers place themselves in the situation of learners.

11. Media education should be aimed both at the adults of today and of the future. It should not only allow them to keep up with the pace of modern development, but also help them to perform better their role as parents. In this sense it is vital to develop media education as part of the concept of life-long learning. Such non-formal education should be given more means and the work of the relevant NGOs should be facilitated in line with Assembly [Recommendation 1437 \(2000\)](#) on non-formal education.

12. It is also essential to seek the co-operation and the involvement of media professionals. They should in particular be encouraged to produce high quality educational and cultural programmes.

13. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

13.1. consider media education as an important area for the work of its competent bodies in the fields of education for democratic citizenship, new information technologies and non-formal education, along the lines set up in the above-mentioned Assembly recommendation;

13.2. ensure a co-ordinated, inter-sectoral approach to this issue;

13.3. examine existing practices in media education in member states with a view to promoting the most successful of them;

13.4. promote an integrated European approach to media education, possibly through the creation of an international office for media education, responsible for co-ordination and networking, in close co-operation with other international organisations such as the European Union and Unesco.

14. The Committee of Ministers should also call on governments and the appropriate authorities of member states to:

14.1. encourage the elaboration and the development of media literacy programmes for children, adolescents and adults;

14.2. promote the elaboration and the development of teacher training programmes in the field of media education;

14.3. involve educational bodies, parents' organisations, media professionals, Internet service providers, NGOs, and so on, in an active dialogue on these issues;

14.4. examine ways of sustaining an offer of educational programmes by the different media that is satisfactory in both quantitative and qualitative terms, and of promoting media education in them.