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**Діяльність на підтримку розвитку медіаграмотності  
в європейському та словацькому контекстах****Activities Supporting the Development of Media Literacy in European and  
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**РЕЗЮМЕ.** Підвищення рівня медіакомпетентності і розвиток критичного мислення стосовно засобів масової інформації є необхідною складовою європейської політики в галузі освіти і професійної підготовки. Питання медіаосвіти та рівня медіаграмотності відображені в кількох взаємопов'язаних документах, які визначальним чином вплинули на розвиток досліджень у цій галузі. У роботі проаналізовані сучасні європейські тенденції та перспективи розвитку медіаграмотності, а також можливості підвищення медіакомпетентності в процесі безперервного навчання. Досліджено словацький контекст просвіти та наукових студій у галузі медіаосвіти. Головне завдання дослідження полягало в аналізі поточних умов і діючих проектів, а також потенційних можливостей розвитку медіаграмотності в словацькому та європейському контекстах.

**Ключові слова:** медіаграмотність, медіакомпетентність, медіаосвіта, освіта, дослідження медіаграмотності.

**ABSTRACT.** The development of media competence and critical thinking towards media is an integral part of the European policy in the sphere of education and professional training. The issues of media education and media literacy are reflected in several consecutive documents that decisively influenced the development of research in this area. The submitted study presents the analysis of the current European trends and the prospects of media literacy development. The possibilities of raising the media competencies in the process of life-long learning is considered. The Slovak dimension of education and research in the area of media education is presented. The main aim of the study is to analyze the current conditions, projects and possibilities for the media literacy development in the Slovak and European context.

**Keywords:** media literacy, media competencies, media education, education, media literacy research.

## Introduction

Given the complex nature of the phenomenon of media literacy and the growth of its social importance, this application field of science is getting more and more at the forefront of the world scientific community's interest. Constant development of media and new communication technologies poses stronger challenges to individuals as well as the society and it brings the need to ensure innovative solutions and to monitor the latest trends of implementation of media education into the everyday practice. "Media literacy development and achieving media competence through the process of media education have become a natural part of contemporary world" [1, p. 13]. In this context, media literacy is identified as one of the primary outputs of complex and structured educational, awareness-raising and scientific activities which bring, in synergic realization, qualitative changes at both individual and social levels. The complex of these activities tends to be defined as media education. It is a multidisciplinary concept that integrates knowledge and scientific apparatus of the wide range of social sciences (in particular mass media communication, sociology, psychology, pedagogy, information and library science, etc.) and that contributes to their application in the process of lifelong learning and the current needs of social practice. Particular timeliness of the issue is proved by the intensive interest of several international organisations (European Commission, UNESCO, OECD, Council of Europe, etc.) which have already adopted several recommendations, directives and legal rules in this area. International scientific community considers media education as one of the most efficient means of acquiring key competences which are necessary for interactive and inclusive use of media and for critical perception of the constantly growing range of media communicates.

The basic objectives, background and definition framework of media education have been already formulated. In 2000 the Recommendation 1466 (2000) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe defined the basic objectives and functions of media education. Member states were invited to ensure coordinated and an inter-ministerial approach to media education while evaluating it in the framework of lifelong learning. In the document, media education is 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" [2].

The follow-up to the above-mentioned international document is the Recommendation CM/Rec(2009) 5 of the Council of Europe on measures to protect children against harmful content and behaviour and to promote their active participation in the new information and communication environment [3]. The document draws attention to the need to deal with the newly arising phenomena related to the mass spread of internet and new media. It is in particular online pornography, the degrading and stereotyped portrayal of women, the portrayal and glorification of violence, racist expressions, solicitation (grooming), the recruitment of child victims of trafficking in human beings, bullying, stalking and other forms of harassment, which are capable of adversely affecting the physical, emotional and psychological well-being of children. In the Appendix to this Recommendation, member states, in co-operation with the private sector, associations of parents, teachers and educators, the media and civil society, are encouraged to promote media literacy for children, young people (but also for parents and educators), in order to prepare them for possible encounters with content and behaviours carrying a risk of harm.

It is important to mention also the Recommendation 1882 (2009) of the Council of Europe titled "The promotion of Internet and online media services appropriate for minors" [4]. The document

encourages member states of the European Union to create appropriate conditions for protection of children and young people and for implementation of appropriate quality standards and systems of evaluation of Internet and online media services appropriate for children and teenagers. The Recommendation also emphasizes that parents need the support of the social institutions for families and schools in order to be ready to handle challenges of the Internet. The state should have the responsibility for raising awareness, providing guidance (also against gender stereotypes), and setting up minimum standards. These minimum standards should include access restrictions to violent content, pornography, advertising for tobacco and alcoholic products and gambling. Such access restrictions could be achieved by filters employed by parents, teachers, librarians or others at their access devices.

We consider important to draw attention also to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council 2006/962/EC of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning [5] which identifies and defines key competences necessary for personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social cohesion and employability in a knowledge society as well as the Reference Framework for key competences for decision-makers, for those who ensure education and training as well as for member state citizens themselves.

In 2007 the above-mentioned document was followed up by the Communication from the European Commission COM (2007) 833 on media literacy in the digital environment [6], which invites member states to intensively deal with the means for the increase of media literacy and to support systematic research in this area. The important moment is also the recommendation to monitor and evaluate, on the regular basis, various aspects and dimensions of media literacy.

In this context, it is worth to mention the Recommendation of the European Commission C (2009) 6464 of 20 August 2009 on media literacy in the digital environment for a more competitive audiovisual and content industry and an inclusive knowledge society [7]. In relation to citizens, the Commission presents media literacy as one of key the prerequisites of raising awareness, competitiveness, innovation, integration and active participation in a social life. One of the key challenges of this document is the recommendation to support systematic and continuous research of media literacy in the digital environment as well as continuous monitoring and evaluating of the level of media literacy in all countries of the European Union.

The issue of media literacy development does not have a long tradition in the conditions of the Slovak Republic and until recently it has not been paid appropriate attention in comparison with other countries. An important milestone that contributed to increased efforts for implementation of necessary measures and processes in this area was the adoption of the Concept of Media Education in the Slovak Republic in the context of lifelong learning [8]. The Concept adopted by the Government of the Slovak Republic in December 2009 defined key objectives, strategies, procedures and prerequisites for integration of media education into individual areas of the public life. In developing this legal document have been involved a wide range of experts from various fields (universities, NGO, researchers, teachers, ministry of education, ministry of culture, etc.). The concept deals with the situation concerning media education, stresses the importance of formal and informal education initiatives in the field, describes the main participants and major initiatives and plans in this area.

The document presents the following principal goals of media education within the lifelong learning process:

- media literacy improvement within all age groups among the population;
- update of media competencies, responsible and critical approach to media, effective use of media and new communication technologies;
- teaching the individuals to learn and make use of possibilities offered to them by media and new communication means to their own benefits;

- protection of children and adolescent youth against threats presented by media and new communication technologies in the content offer and way of communication;
- protection of specific groups (specific groups of adult population, seniors) against contents and service which might threaten them by their nature and those which they are not able to assess due to the insufficient level of media literacy;
- prevention of all forms of generation “communication and information stagnation”.

## Research Methods

The Concept of Media Education in the Slovak Republic in the context of lifelong learning is the response, in addition to other legislative instruments, also to European Audiovisual Media Service Directive [9] establishing the obligation for EU member states to submit regular reports on the level of media literacy in the country concerned. Under this directive, the Slovak Republic is obliged to submit regular evaluation reports on the current state and level of media literacy in the Slovak Republic. Fulfilment of this task in the conditions of the Slovak Republic has not been systemically solved yet and due to insufficient funds it has not been realized in effective way. The obligation to submit reports on the state of media literacy was, in conditions of Slovak republic, transposed to the Act No. 308/2000 on broadcasting and retransmission, as amended, while Art. 5 Sect. 1 (j) thereof establishes the obligation for the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission to submit documentation related to evaluation of the state and level of media literacy in the Slovak Republic. Given the fact that the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission does not have sufficient capacities to fulfil these tasks, it delegated this task on the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava [10].

To implement the project of evaluation of media literacy levels in Slovakia, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava received a grant from Slovak Research and Development Agency. The objective of this research activity is to implement, in the Slovak conditions, the most appropriate research strategies enabling to measure and evaluate the level of media literacy in the whole range of age categories, levels of education, residence and other social and demographic indicators.

On the basis of the analysis of the current state of the issue, we considered to use the following research project methodology:

1. To identify, document and assess relevant procedures and strategies of media literacy development in the national context.

Achievement and fulfilment of the set objective was ensured by:

- analyzing published procedures, instruments and strategies and by creating their categorization as regards the extent of complexity of theoretical and application approaches to the examined issue;
- web databases which contain links to published procedures, instruments and strategies in order to collect and sort published characteristics and examples of good practices;
- full-text databases of magazines, quotation indexes and bibliography databases to obtain critical amount of necessary information which concerns the examined issue and formulation of categorization system criteria for assessing the extent of complexity of analyzed information.

2. To identify, assess and analyze relevant quantitative and qualitative research strategies focused on measurement and evaluation of individual aspects of media literacy.

Achievement and fulfilment of the set objective was ensured by:

- qualitative examination and verification of indicators and criteria which have been developed in theoretical and application framework of the previous studies and research projects;
- determining basic variables used in the previous researches and existing statistical databases pursuing selected parameters related to the issue of media, information and digital literacy and other types of literacy;

- verifying usability of obtained data in the conditions of the Slovak Republic;
- creating the overview of indicator sets which should satisfy the condition of validity and reliability in measuring chosen indicators;
- creating categorization based on the assessment of theoretical basis, used research strategies and the extent of complexity of the used models.

3. To innovate, adapt and carry out pilot testing of a complex system of measurement and evaluation of the level of media literacy in the conditions of the Slovak Republic, processed in accordance with the current recommendations and findings related to the previous research project phases.

The research project involved the team of researchers composed of research and pedagogical workers and postgraduate students of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of UCM in Trnava. Composition of the team of researchers was designed in a way that all professionals having pedagogic and research experience and the relevant publishing activity, with the particular focus on the area of media education, mass media studies and development of media competences, would be represented. The team of researchers composed of the workers of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication has all prerequisites for the successful realization of all tasks. They are qualified and experienced university pedagogues who participated in the whole range of the application and research tasks also in the past. The most important are:

- Workers of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication participated also in the projects of preparation of media education teachers, realized by other institutions, including National Institute for Education in Bratislava, especially the project of continuous learning of teachers – specialized qualification study for teachers of media education: *Preparation of teachers of media education at elementary schools and 8-year secondary grammar schools* adopted by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic in October 2007. The pilot version of the project was realized at Institute for Education in 2008–2010.

- Workers of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication are the only ones who created and who realize the program *Qualification study of media education for secondary school teachers*, in the framework of which the pedagogues from practice can extend their qualifications with a new school subject of “Media Education”.

- In the framework of the project *Proposal for a concept of education related to media literacy at secondary schools in the conditions of the Slovak Republic* in 2006–2008 the professionals of the Faculty dealt with the introduction of media education at secondary schools.

- Workers of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication also participated in other important concept projects related to media education. As members of expert groups they participated in the preparation of *Concept of integration of media education as an innovative element into a system of formal education on the level of elementary and secondary level of education*, and the application study *Conditions of professional and pedagogic competence of teachers of media education*.

## Results and discussion

The existing variety of approaches to measurement and evaluation of the media literacy of respondents, inconsistency of notions and quite non-transparent character of the used instruments cause difficulties in deciding on their use.

### *Media Literacy Assessment in the European context*

In the European context, one of the most consistent approaches is brought by a study “Testing and Refining Criteria to Assess Media Literacy Levels” [11], which represents relatively integral

overview of contexts and skills related to media literacy. The document follows up to and develops the theses and concepts formulated in a “Study on Assessment Criteria for Media Literacy Levels” [12]. Approaches specified in both materials were acquired by the European Commission. Main objectives of the above-mentioned studies included creation of the proposal for potential criteria and indicators for media literacy level evaluation in Europe. The result of this research was the creation of the indicative framework which included so-called factors of an environment and individual competences in the area of media. In the project financed by the European Union, pilot testing of such research concept was carried out. Although Slovakia is included in the intermediate evaluation, the data are mostly secondary.

These data were not obtained by means of the field survey in our conditions, but they come from regular statistical surveys of Eurostat and Eurobarometer. Informative capability of such data for the purpose of media literacy measurement is therefore insufficient. It is mostly information concerning the extent of media use by individuals, for example the number of TV sets in households, speed of Internet connection etc. Media literacy is, however, much more complex concept which includes the capacity to analyze, evaluate and interpret various media communicates, the capacity of critical thinking, creative problem solving, the capacity to communicate effectively using various media channels. This broader list of context facts and criteria was in the framework of both above-mentioned research studies tested in a more detailed manner by means of online questionnaire survey only in seven EU countries (Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Great Britain).

Recommendations of both research studies contain the acute need to support research and educational projects focused on testing and evaluation of various aspects of media literacy in individual member states. In the medium term, broad inter-institutional cooperation should lead to development and implementation of internationally recognized scale-up systems and assessment of skills related to media literacy.

### ***The Assessment of the level of media literacy in Slovakia***

The Assessment of the level of media literacy does not have a long tradition in Slovakia. Some partial information on various aspects of media literacy in Slovakia can be found in the studies carried out during last 7 years.

In 2007, the first research conducted a project focused on assessment of young people’s media literacy level in Slovakia. Quantitative empirical research methods were used in the research – combination of a questionnaire with written tests and their content analysis and evaluation. Overall number of respondents was 674. The sample was stratified according to age, gender, place of residence and educational level. The research strategy distinguished 4 basic characteristics of media literacy: the ability to get access to information from media, to analyse them, to expose them to evaluation and be able to form information independently. These components make up the basis of capacity that should be adopted by media literacy person [13].

In 2009, second research project was carried out in Slovakia to assess the level of online competence among young people aged 13 to 30 years. Data collected from a sample of 3,350 respondents was based on online questionnaires. Results and recommendations formed by research serve as a suitable underlying document for better understanding of the young generation and for a systemic approach in preparing youth policies [14].

IMEC – Centre of media Literacy conducted two surveys targeted on the scale and the form of the representation of media education in the educational system in Slovakia. These surveys were focused on the comparison of the level of media education strategies at different schools in the country. The main aim was to map current level of the implementation of media education into the curriculum in elementary and secondary education in the Slovak Republic.

First survey carried out in 2011 was focused on current status of media education teaching at secondary schools. Research team collected data from 631 schools – this represents 82 % of all schools in Slovakia [15]. The second survey was conducted in 2012 on the representative sample of 567 elementary schools from different municipalities and regions in Slovakia. In both surveys, data collection was carried out by the method of telephone interview with teachers or school directors. This method was combined with curriculum analysis [16].

Both studies show some interesting findings and conclusions:

- Only 10 % of schools taught the media literacy as a subject on their own. It means that only a very small number of schools include media education in their curriculum as separate subject.
- About 54 % of schools reported they use some elements of media education in other subjects – especially at Slovak language and literature, ethics, informatics.
- Approximately 22 % of schools tend to use more practical methods of media education - especially in the form of school magazines.
- 14 % school reported they use other forms – e.g. film screenings at schools, discussions with journalists, etc.

The significant finding is that more than 90 % of teachers have never completed any training related to media education. We suppose this is one of several reasons why it is necessary to continue with massive training programmes for teachers.

IMEC – Media Literacy Centre conducted research targeted on the media literacy of senior population. Quantitative empirical research methods were used in the research carried out in 2013. Overall number of respondents was 1022 aged 55 to 94 years. The specific objectives of the research was to analyze the levels of media literacy in relation to (a) skills in the use of media and communication technologies (b) knowledge about the functioning, behavior, benefits, risks and media relations, (c) attitude towards the media [17].

### ***Key actors in the field of media education***

In Slovakia and its media education area there are mainly the subjects from academic sector, public education, culture and non-profit sector cooperating intensively. One of such important actors is the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of UCM in Trnava. In 2012 the faculty was awarded the accreditation for a new study program called “Applied Media Studies”. In bachelor master and doctoral studies students obtain complex knowledge about media education, media competence development as well as theoretical and practical aspects of media communication. A graduate of the study is an expert in preparation of a wide range of media communicates, in particular communicates of public and private nature and educational nature, and programs whose primary target groups are children and young people.

This new interdisciplinary degree programme currently helps improve situation with teacher’s training process in the field of media education in the Slovak education system. As a part of this project university also prepared curriculum, training modules, methodologies, courses syllabi and other teaching documents and materials. This programme includes the preparation of secondary schools teachers and other school professionals responsible for media education. However, the graduate’s profile is broader. Graduates are able to assert themselves as experts in the following fields:

- production of educational programmes;
- dramaturgy and screenwriting, focusing on children and youth audience;
- creating serious computer games;
- creating educational materials and methodologies for other media literacy teachers.

In 2010 the Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava was awarded the accreditation of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic in the area of training of media education teachers and it offers the accredited

educational program of continuous education for teachers called “*Qualification study of Media Education school subject for secondary school teachers*”. It is the only educational project allowing secondary school teachers to obtain the full qualification for teaching of a separate school subject of Media Education. This two-year educational programme was successfully completed by first 27 teachers from all parts of Slovakia in February 2011.

Another important actor is the Methodology and Pedagogy Centre in Bratislava. It is a public institution within the authority of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak republic. The centre puts into practice important educational programmes and offers methodical help to teachers and educators. Within the programme called *Motivating methods in education*, which is supported by the European Union, this organization also supports production of audiovisual educational programmes and didactic aids for the media education area.

Important social actor promoting media education in Slovakia is non-profit organization eSlovensko. This NGO is specialized in raising awareness of responsible use of Internet, mobile communication and new technologies. In Slovakia the organization is an implementation subject of a program “*Zodpovedne.sk*” which is implemented in the framework of the Community program of the European Union “*Safer Internet plus*”. Its partners in raising awareness of responsible use of Internet and new technologies are, for example, the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Slovak Committee for UNICEF, Research Institute for Child Psychology and Pathopsychology, the international research project *EU Kids Online III*, dozens of elementary and secondary schools and other subjects. Non-profit organization eSlovensko regularly organizes seminar, workshops and other events focused on raising awareness of responsible use of Internet, mobile communication and new technologies.

In accordance with education legislation in Slovakia, media education can be taught in two ways:

1. Media education as a subject on its own. Each school may include media education in its curriculum as a separate subject. It is not a compulsory subject, therefore, it depends on the particular school whether the subject is inserted into curriculum or not. In fact, in Slovakia there are very few schools which teach media education as a separate subject. This might be reasoned by the absence of qualified teachers. According to existing surveys, schools are interested in this issue.

2. Media education as a topic integrated into other subjects. This form of media education is compulsory for every school (primary and secondary). However, the form is very formal and inefficient. The main reason is lack of teacher’s knowledge in this field. Many teachers do not understand the essence or basic principles of media education. Some educators confuse media education with educational use of media technologies – for example with using interactive board, power point presentations, etc. To conclude, many Slovak educators still do not know how to integrate elements of media education into lessons effectively.

Main social initiatives outside the school system in Slovakia are provided by NGO’s. Especially active are the organization *Laura – Association of Salesian Youth*. They organize media school, activity in nonformal education for children and young people in media skills. There are some occasional activities in the area of media education prepared by media, e.g. the daily *SME* has prepared a project for schools called *Sme v škole*. One part of this informal educational project focused on media education. The public television has prepared a 40-episodes cycle of educational programmes for children and youth. The programme called *Media spies* is devoted to media education issues. The main idea of the programme is the search for answers to the question: what is the right approach of recipients to media, how to perceive media, how to use them, how to identify and eliminate the influence of manipulative elements. The main protagonists of the TV series *Media spies* are children who give inquiring questions and investigate various aspects of running the media.

Also important is the role of the academic sector. The Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava organizes an annual conference Megatrends and Media held in the Smolenice castle. One of the conference sections deals with media literacy and presents a platform for cooperation and an exchange of ideas between a wide range of experts on media education from Slovakia and abroad.

## Conclusions

Our research confirms that “Under the influence of the technological revolution, many significant socio-cultural changes have occurred (mainly in the realm of information technologies) that generated the formation of a new communication phenomena” [18, p. 721]. It cannot be expected that all teachers will become experts on media literacy. Therefore, it is also necessary to create separate educational programmes at universities that will prepare professionals in this field. They could act as advisors, tutors and training specialists for other teachers, parents, vulnerable youth and adults, etc. Each aspirant to teaching profession should acquire skills of media, information and digital literacy. “Essential for school-organized content of media education is to define the capacity of participants in the educational process and to express the context of his / her specific social roles” [19, p.30].

Current children and youth are different from the students from ten years ago; they grow up with new technology, as digital natives. Teachers and tutors must adapt their teaching strategies to this fact. Teachers should integrate world of new media into their courses. Schools should acquaint their students with the awareness not to allow media to manipulate them. A better way is to use the media in accordance with our individual and societal interests. This approach should be based on examples of good practice, common approaches and challenges described in the relevant research. There is also a wide range of research methods used in the field of media, communication and information studies, most of which are also applicable in measuring and evaluating the level of media literacy. When analyzing a number of examples of research experience, we found that effective trend is a combination of several techniques that are used methodological procedures used in quantitative as well as qualitative research [20].

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**Петранова Д., Врабец Н., Мазакова С. Деятельность в поддержку развития медиаграмотности в европейском и словацком контекстах**

*Повышение уровня медиакомпетентности и развитие критического мышления по отношению к средствам массовой информации является необходимой составляющей европейской политики в области образования и профессиональной подготовки. Вопросы медиаобразования и уровня медиаграмотности отражены в нескольких взаимосвязанных документах, оказавших определяющее влияние на развитие исследований в этой области. В данной работе проанализированы современные европейские тенденции и перспективы развития медиаграмотности, а также возможности повышения медиакомпетентности в процессе непрерывного обучения. Исследован словацкий контекст просвещения и научных исследований в области медиаобразования. Главная задача исследования состояла в анализе нынешних условий и действующих проектов, а также перспективных возможностей развития медиаграмотности в словацком и европейском контекстах.*

**Ключевые слова:** медиаграмотность, медиакомпетентность, медиаобразование, образование, исследования медиаграмотности.