

DECLARATION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Information, communication, media, and education landscape is changing and this creates new opportunities and challenges for modern societies. The quality of received information greatly affects our decisions and subsequent steps, as well as our opportunities to enjoy the fundamental rights and freedoms, to make independent decisions and contribute to personal development. The technological advancement in telecommunications has encouraged, in qualitative and quantitative terms, the development of the media and of other information providers used by citizens to acquire various forms of knowledge and to receive numerous and important pieces of information, with an opportunity to further process and distribute them. Such an advancement and development is followed by numerous challenges which require an adequate social response. The well-informed and educated individual is a cornerstone of any society and democratic process. The civic literacy set of skills and knowledge includes strong media and information literacy and is necessary for everyone. The media and information literacy is a set of skills which empower the citizens to access, download, understand, evaluate, use, produce, and share information and media content in all formats, using different tools, in critical, ethical and effective ways, for the purpose of participation in private, professional and social activities.

This reflects only a segment of the importance of and the need for media and information literacy. As emphasised by the Moscow Declaration on Media and Information Literacy (2012), individuals, organisations, and societies have to address numerous barriers and challenges to the free and effective use of information, including the following:

- Limited capacities, resources and infrastructure;
- Censorship, limited information in the public domain, commercialisation, privatisation, and monopolisation of information;
- Lack of respect for cultural and linguistic diversity;
- Excessive and inappropriate legal barriers to accessing, distributing and owning information;
- Lack of awareness of long-term preservation of information, particularly personal digital information; and
- Lack of cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration among stakeholders (between librarians and media educators, between media and academic organisations, etc.).

WE, the signatories of this Declaration are of the opinion that:

1. Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is a prerequisite for the sustainable development of open, plural, inclusive and participatory knowledge societies, and of the civic institutions, organisations, communities and individuals which comprise these societies.
2. Media and Information Literacy refers to the citizens' cognitive, technical and social skills and capacities required to access, critically evaluate, use, and contribute to information and media content through traditional and digital information and media platforms and technologies, understand how those platforms and technologies operate, understand how to enjoy their own rights and respect the rights of others while using the platforms and technologies, how to recognise and avoid harmful content and services, how to use information, media content and platforms purposefully to fulfil their communication needs and interests as individuals and

members of their communities and to practice active and responsible participation in the traditional and digital public domain and in democratic processes.

3. The MIL concept supports UNESCO's integral approach, and builds on the Consultations on MIL Strategies and Policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2018), as well as on prior international documents such as the Prague Declaration "Towards an Information Literate Society" (2003); Alexandria Proclamation "Beacons of the Information Society" (2005); Fez Declaration on Media and Information Literacy (2011); the IFLA Media and Information Literacy recommendations (2011); the Moscow Declaration on Media and Information Literacy (2012); and the UNESCO MIL Policy and Strategy Guidelines (2013). MIL underpins essential competencies needed to work effectively towards achievement of the UN Millennium Development goals, the UN Declaration on Human Rights, and the goals promoted by the World Summit on the Information Society.
4. In order to achieve these goals, individuals, communities, businesses, organisations and nations continually need information about themselves and their physical and social environments, and an understanding of the many different media outlets through which such information is found, understood and communicated. Yet the media are in a constant state of change. New technological developments continue to alter the parameters of work, leisure, family life and citizenship. All around the world, people are living in an environment increasingly defined by the convergence of different media, interactivity, networking and globalisation. Particularly for younger people, the importance of media and peer networks has increased, and a greater part of growing up takes place outside the traditional learning environments. The creation of media today no longer lies in the hands of a limited group of professionals; now everyone can generate it.
5. At the same time, digital divides remain significant. Many people in Bosnia and Herzegovina have no access to information and media at all. Even in the developed world, limitations are placed on physical access to technologies and many people lack the necessary skills and critical thinking abilities needed to make informed decisions and solve problems in every aspect of life.

Therefore, WE, the signatories of this Declaration, call for:

- 1) THE CREATION OF A STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA;
- 2) THE DESIGNATION OF A PUBLIC AUTHORITY THAT WILL HAVE A COORDINATING ROLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY POLICIES AND STRATEGIES;
- 3) THE HARMONISATION OF THE FORMAL EDUCATION SECTOR WITH MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY OBJECTIVES, together with the capacity building for those who will be implementing the policies in the educational practice, as well as strengthening of interdisciplinary academic programs;
- 4) THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY FOR ADULTS IN THE CONTEXT OF INFORMAL AND LIFELONG LEARNING, in order to build an environment for the continual development of necessary skills for active citizenship and employability;
- 5) THE STRENGTHENING OF THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES and other heritage institutions as key actors in the lifelong learning and education process, in particular learning

with the support of new media and technologies, and in transferring MIL knowledge to broad user communities;

- 6) THE RECOGNITION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS as partners in media literacy strategy and policy development processes, and the development of cooperation between the public and civil sector in policy analyses, consultations, in defining strategic development directions and in the implementation of education projects.

Sarajevo, 28 January 2019