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**FEBRUARY 24, 2016**

## **PROMOTING CITIZENSHIP AND FUNDAMENTAL VALUES THROUGH EDUCATION**

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Only the speech as made may be considered authentic

🗣️ It is often said that our societies **are information societies**.

But they are rather excess-information societies: images, text, media messages have become prolific, ubiquitous and all-embracing.

Internet and digital systems multiply them well beyond the "*Gutenberg galaxy*", the written press and even radio and television. Today, social networks, tweets and blogs make up the everyday environment of the vast majority of young people. Even before they can learn to read, children are exposed to a massive abundance of images.

More than ever, information contributes powerfully to shape the socialisation of this new generation of "**digital natives**", to "*in-form*" them, i.e. to shape their identities, their worldviews and behaviour.

To a great extent, this abundance of information is an **opportunity**.

At no other time in human history did we benefit from such access to a virtually unlimited amount and variety of data, to almost total nomadic ubiquity in even the most remote corners of the "*Global village*", to an instant interactivity that ignores time and space.

It is an extraordinary vector for **opening** and **discovery**.

However, this mushrooming of information also carries a **triple risk**:

- first that of **passive consumption, of saturation and dispersion** – the lack of a critical spirit and distance, the inability to navigate through a flood of high speed and fragmented data, to sort, prioritise and contextualize this data;
- then, the risk of **incomprehension** – through lack of knowledge of the mechanisms used to fabricate the information and images, lack of ability to decrypt and use the media in an independent informed and responsible way;
- Finally, the threat of **manipulation** – this is the most serious when ignorance combined with the loss of meaning makes young people vulnerable to the worse types of propaganda, false information and delusional conspiracy theories, intolerance and fanaticism.

This is why media and news education has become a **major challenge for our societies**.

It is an imperative obligation to prepare young people to exercise citizenship in a democracy, to pass on a culture to them (which, to quote Pasolini is also a "*resistance to distraction*"), to teach them to form and freely exercise their judgement.

To address this great and beautiful challenge, the school can and should build on the strengths which it has always had: reflection, thought and knowledge.

**For many years now, schools have been mobilised around these priorities.**

For example, in France, **for more than 30 years**, the "*The Liaison Centre for Education and Means of Information*" – CLEMI – has been an intermediary between the world of education and the media.

Each year, it organises a "*Week of the press and media at school*": the next event from 21 to 26 March, will involve some 3.3 million pupils, 210,000 teachers and almost 16,000 schools. Nearly 1,900 media partners will be involved by providing free access to over one million copies of newspapers and magazines, by receiving pupils and their teachers in radio and television studios, by having their journalists take part in debates and other meetings and events.

Beyond this main event and numerous other initiatives, each year CLEMI **trains** 25,000 teachers of all levels and disciplines in media knowledge and literacy.

It also supports pupils who create **school newspapers** whose printed version is also available in bi-media form (i.e. a paper version extended on the web) in radios, blogs and websites. By thus being themselves faced with news constraints, the youth gain a better grasp on how these systems work, they develop their creativity within a team and learn how to clearly and freely express their views.

After the terrorist attacks in France and other countries of Europe and the world and by virtue of the Paris Declaration, a **new stage** is required.

Media and news literacy has become an urgent civic requirement.

This is why I wanted to put it on an **unprecedented scale**.

In line with the *Law on Refounding the Republic's School System* it is now at the heart of the three major developments in the French educational system that are already underway or in the pipeline:

- a new "Set of knowledge, skills and culture" that redefine what all pupils must have acquired by the end of their compulsory education several areas of which refer to media and information literacy;
- the "mobilisation of schools for the values of the Republic" which has set up a "*Civic Path*" for all pupils, deployed a "*citizens reserve*" consisting of over 4,000 adult volunteers to work alongside teachers and encouraged the creation of a media in each junior and senior secondary school;
- the reform of junior secondary school which, starting from the next school year, will offer "*practical interdisciplinary teaching*" on the theme "*information, communication and citizenship*".

Media and news literacy is thus anchored in a genuine **all-inclusive strategy**. In particular, it relies on a network of CLEMI coordinators spread all over the country. It has already resulted

in the multiplication of school media and the development of partnerships with information professionals.

This strengthening of media and information education is part of a **European dynamic** already well underway.

The new revision of the "*Audiovisual media services*" directive goes in this direction and should make such platforms as *YouTube* more accountable for content that encourages youth radicalisation. We wish that the management of these platforms be undertaken with vigilance together with editorial responsibility when dealing with illegal content. I am thinking in particular of contents that are hateful, that advocate terrorism, or the ones related to the protection of minors and to the prevention of radicalization.

Similarly, it should be possible to have new quality projects funded by the *Erasmus+* programme, which I hope will mobilise around the theme of inclusive education well beyond 2016.

It is in particular in this way that the approach to education across the Union will take better account of the essential dimension of citizenship. ”

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