

## What Can Media Do For Media Literacy?

The concept of media literacy in the last few years takes an important place in the discussions of non-governmental organizations dealing with the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The academic community is considering this issue, but we can say - not enough (among public universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, only Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Banja Luka and Faculty of Philosophy of the University of East Sarajevo have course of Media Literacy). Although the process of media literacy is expected to engage the educational institutions, NGO sector and media, we will put media in this article in the first place and examine their role in this process.

One of the definitions of media literacy is "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and transmit messages through the media" (Aufderheide, 1992 in: Zgrabljic Rotar, 2005: 1). Thus, media literacy is a process in which an individual creates competences for access, analysis, interpretation and understanding of information, but also creation of media content. Taking into account that digital media today, in era of information technology, are dominating the classical media, such as radio, television, and press - the result is over-information (or "information overload" (Koković, 2007: 41)), but also with the contents that are submitted as information, but without any verifiability, accuracy and professionalism during their dissemination. In a country such as B&H, media regulation is low, and there is no regulation of digital media space, which contributes to the spreading of news from different news sites in a way that respects only the principles of speed, concision and unverifiedness. This contributes the transition from immediacy to the excess of mediation, or to the situation where the audience wish to comprehend their reality as directly as possible, while actually comply the non-critical adoption of the content.

Media illiteracy is a dangerous thing for every democratic country and for civil society. Already accustomed to fast accepting of new technology, without much knowledge of its possibilities, the audience is also left behind by the flash of information that comes continuously from

moment to moment. Certainly, the solution is not to give more confidence to the classical media, because in a country with corruption rooted in cultural patterns, a professional and objective approach has become an exception of worthy admiration, regardless of the type of media. Therefore, literacy for critically oriented and educated citizens who are able to interpret information and make the right choice between false news (in all types of media) must start from elementary school and this is imperative. The school system(s) in B&H do not yet have space for this, but needs continue to grow, both by children and parents.

In order to raise awareness of the needs of a contemporary media audience, there are several bright examples of news sites in B&H that are dedicated to the struggle for fair, objective and impartial information. They are an example of how media can deal with media literacy.

**Analiziraj.ba** is a platform that was established with the aim of monitoring, analyzing and evaluating media content in Bosnia and Herzegovina. With the help of predefined and clear methodology, this platform can be used to find various media analyzes, with special News analysis. Particular attention is paid to these central information shows because through them the audience needs to gain a faithful picture of the socio-political situation, both in local communities and at a higher level. That is why, these shows reflect the editorial policies of a media house, but they are also an indication of their vulnerability to political influences and manipulations, which the audience is often unaware of. What we would highlight on this web site is a special section titled Media and Information Literacy within which media analysts from B&H are offering practical instructions and explanations that teach about the need for media literacy as part of the overall civic education.

**Raskrinkavanje.ba** is a news site that is relatively new in B&H and provides specific analysis of media content and media ratings to help develop the ability to assess media credibility in B&H. It is a unique portal that deals with fact checking in the media, fueled by unprofessional reporting, transmission of "fake news", fabricating stories and misinforming the public. Identification of such media and their assessment in accordance with a clearly defined methodology results in placing the media in one of two lists: the Media List publishing false news; and the High Risk Media List, which show a tendency to unprofessional reporting and the

risk of publishing false news. There is offered a rating system that clearly indicates what "media violation" refers to: satire, clickbait, covert advertising, error, biased reporting, conspiracy theory, pseudoscience, manipulation of facts, disinformation, spin, false news, false news transmitted, denied, censorship and correction. This approach enables the public to determine which media deserved trust in their professional work, and which is expected to place inaccurate information. The special value of this site is in their two-way communication with the audience. Namely, the platform calls on citizens to identify dubious news and media, to recognize and report such content. In this way, citizens are first educated, and then create the habit of filtering the content they are exposed to, which is the essence of media literacy.

Access to such platforms is also recognizable in the surrounding countries. In Croatia there is a portal **medijskapismenost.hr** that is in various ways focused on establishing media literacy of parents, guardians and teachers, as well as directly of children. Significant issue of media literacy is security on the Internet, which specifically addresses this portal. The Portal Fake News Tracker (**fakenews.rs**) operates in Serbia, on a similar principle that **raskrinkavanje.ba** works in B&H. This web site deals with the deconstruction of media news in Serbia, the discovery of false news, as well as research of the phenomenon of fake news.

It is the deconstruction of the content method by which every citizen, whether a media professional, a journalist or a public can master, if he understands how media works in the modern age, and if citizens are educated for a critical approach to both technology and information. Critical approach implies that the public addresses the media themselves - whether it contains impressum, whether it has contact; whether the content is compatible with the title, or the title has a sensationalistic purpose; how credible are sources and how many of them is there; whether the author is known and who is he; whether it is parody or satire etc. Media that wants to show its objectivity and professionalism will transparently display its data, deserving trust of its audience. Unfortunately, in B&H, it will be hardest to find information on media funding, which is the main premise for performing the function of public interest. Earlier phenomena such as tabloidisation or propaganda (earlier in appearance, but certainly in use today), have influenced the creation of values and cultural patterns that are reflected in the

acceptance of messages as they are disseminated and active participation of citizens in the creation of social reality. Media literacy is precisely the component of society that is most needed for all generations in order for the democratic community to function. Such a kind of activism, which equally requires respect for the rights and responsibilities disclosed to the public, contributes to the proper informing of citizens and thus to the increase of professionalism in journalism.

How can classical media help in media literacy?

A newer example is found in neighboring Serbia: Recently there was a protest in Belgrade that gathered a large number of citizens with opposing views. Media House *Studio B* has published a content, an event report, in which the journalist made statements and negative attitudes about the event, as well as a series of inaccurate data, with apparent bias. The whole event has caused a tremendous reaction and conflict within the media related to argument „the right of opinion - the responsibility for the pronounced“. One of the worst consequences of this event was a series of brutal threats directed at the account of this journalist who have no justification and once again stressed the need to condemn the violence. In the whole of this situation, a move by the media company *TV Prva*, which called the chief editor of *Studio B* and a long-time journalist to its program, was noticed. What we highlight from this discussion is asking questions about what is really a job of journalists, whether journalism codes are respected and what is objective information? This conversation has pointed out that within the media itself there has to be much to clarify, and that mainstream media can play a significant role in media literacy if they are condemning bad journalism (if such a term can be used because journalism is actually - good journalism) with arguments. Their role in clarifying responsibility (both journalists and editors) as well as possible abuses is self-criticism without which there is no development of media literacy.

Platforms mentioned in the text that analyze media content earning accountability are certainly a good beginning for media literacy. To encourage this process, it is necessary for the wider audience to come to them and gain insight into what the criticism is and why it is useful. The best support is for the media to communicate with these platforms in a way that will transmit

their reports and analyzes, publish denials, and thus show willingness to truly be the leaders of the struggle for truth.

The content of this text is the sole responsibility of author and BH Journalists Association and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union. 

## **Biography:**

Bojana Vukojević is employed as a senior assistant at the University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Political Science, at the Sociology Study Program. She completed her basic sociology studies at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Banja Luka, graduated from Sociology at the University of Novi Sad where she is now in the PhD study of sociology. She has several published works in scientific journals and journals, and has authored several articles on media responsibility. She has participated in numerous cultural and media research.