



Ministry of Digital Policy, Media and Telecommunications
Secretariat General for Media and Communication

Contribution to the Nations Human Rights Commissioner's request regarding the
implementation of the third phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education with
special emphasis on media professionals and journalists

The Secretariat General for Media and Communication of the Ministry of Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Media is significantly active in the area of protection of human rights, acknowledging the need for an integrated approach which involves actions from all public authorities that take into account the human rights dimension in the course of their operation. Fulfilling the role of the responsible governmental entity, the Secretariat bases its actions on the principles of pluralism and freedom of expression while respecting and promoting people's fundamental rights. In this context, the Secretariat identifies the crucial role of Human Rights Education and supports the World Program of Human Rights Council by undertaking significant initiatives in the field.

More specifically, within its area of competence, the Secretariat General for Media and Communication places special focus on the upholding of human rights in the media environment by empowering the people that work and support it, that is media professionals and journalists. In the following paragraphs, we present you the relevant actions that are undertaken as well as planned by the Secretariat for the immediate future:

Memorandum of Cooperation with KETHI

In February 2016 the Secretariat General for Media and Communication signed with **KETHI (Greek Research Centre for Gender Equality)** a **Memorandum of Cooperation** that includes the exchange of expertise and the planning of concrete actions for the promotion of gender equality and the elimination of gender stereotypes in the media. This initiative -of unlimited duration- is driven by the increased perception of the challenges that women face in the media (as users, consumers, employees) and the imperative consequent to promote digital literacy- bound up with the concept of a digitally informed citizen that can respond to the needs of the modern information society, achieving a balance between the risks and the opportunities that are inherent to it.

The Memorandum is specifically oriented to issues of unbiased and gender-sensitive content. In this framework, a research will be conducted in Greek media in order to identify any sexist stereotypes in news discourse. The outcomes of this research will result in the development of a manual for journalists and other media actors with **guidelines** regarding **fair representation** and inclusion of women and men in their content. Furthermore, a series of awareness raising seminars in the areas of non-discrimination, equality and information literacy will be organized, targeted to professionals working in the media

Club of Venice Seminar on Refugee Crisis in Lesvos

The Secretariat General for Media and Communication organized a Club of Venice's¹ thematic seminar, entitled "*Refugee and immigration crisis: Facing a European problem*". The seminar took place in April 2016 on the Greek island of Lesvos, with the participation of over 60 General Directors, Directors and Heads of Communications Services of 23 EU member-states and accession countries, as well as senior representatives from European institutions (European Parliament, Council and Commission), academics and members of think tanks.

As part of the seminar, delegates took part in a Coast Guard patrol and visited the Registration and Identification Centre at Moria and the Open Hospitality Centre at Kara Tepe, where they were briefed by officials and talked to representatives of humanitarian organizations.

These on-site visits were followed by an exchange of views between participants, during which the Secretary General for Media and Communication, Eleftherios Kretsos and the spokesman of the Coordinating Body for the Management of the Refugee Crisis, George Kyritsis, made brief presentations.

Co-hosting of the #Retreat Conference 2016

The Secretariat General for Media and Communication, in cooperation with the Open University of Cyprus and the Advanced Media Institute, co-hosted the International Conference entitled "**#Retreat Conference 2016: Digital Journalism-solution to the media crisis?**" (September 2016). The Conference explored the current status of journalism by focusing in new digital media formats and their consequences in the production, (wide) circulation and "consumption" of data as well as their overall influence in areas like public administration, science and arts. During its course the participants were offered the possibility to participate in the international dialogue, regarding the role of internet and its effects in the evolution of journalism and communication, in the light of the protection of the fundamental rights for freedom of expression and access to information.

Organisation and hosting of human rights related events

The Secretariat General for Media and Communication held, jointly organized or hosted on its premises, events related to human rights protection (and relevant training). As an indication, we wish to mention:

❖ An honorary event entitled "**Yannis Behrakis: The man behind the image**" was held in order to award the abovementioned international photojournalist, in charge of the photographic section of REUTERS agency and for years accredited correspondent of the Secretariat. Yannis Behrakis presented his experiences, obtained through his 25-year old mission in plenty crisis hotpots around the world, and indicated the importance of highlighting the human suffering and the subsequent need to promote human rights protection through the power of the photographic lenses (February 2016).

❖ With regard to the international women's day in 2016, the Secretariat General for Media and Communication organized and hosted on its premises (March 2016) an event entitled "**Women**

¹ The Club of Venice is an informal group of Europe's most senior and experienced government communications professionals. Founded in 1986, it convenes several times each year to provide members with an opportunity to discuss issues of mutual interest, share experiences and best practice, and offer mutual support.

on the News Front" with the participation of representatives from public bodies that promote equality, as well as women journalists. The main objective of the event was to discuss the challenges that women face (mainly as employees) in the media sector as also to propose examples and best practices in order to manage and overcome them. In addition, women journalists presented the history and the evolvement of Women's Journalism in Greece, from 19th Century and the production of "Newspaper of the Ladies" until today's electronic media.

- ❖ The National Center of Social Research, with the support of the Secretariat General for Media and Communication, organized an event entitled: "**WORLD INTERNET PROJECT Greece**", during which the outcomes of a research conducted by the NCSR, were presented regarding the penetration of the impact of internet infrastructure in Greek society. The main aim of the study was to highlight critical issues related to the effects of internet use, it's informative and entertaining value, the digital gap, as well as the evaluation of relevant parameters such as the level of freedom of expression, the degree of caused dependency, internet reliability, invasion of privacy issues etc. (October 2016).
 - ❖ The Online Publishers Association of Greece, with the support of the Secretariat General for Media and Communication, organized an event entitled "**Self-regulation of the Online Media-Presentation of the Code of Conduct for Journalists and Publishers**" during which the aforementioned Code (at the initiative of the Association) was presented, in an effort to improve the credibility and quality of the transmitted content through digital media. (November 2016)
 - ❖ The Greek Company for the Study of Internet Addiction, in cooperation with the Secretariat General for Media and Communication, organized a scientific day event entitled: "**Academy of Digital Citizenship: Preparing the digital citizen of the future**". During this event, issues were addressed that fall within the field of digital governance, education and access, as well as issues relevant to the protection of human rights in the digital era (December 2016).
 - ❖ The Secretariat General for Media and Communication co-organized and hosted on its premises along with the Secretary General for Justice, Transparency and Human Rights a conference entitled "**Greece before the international human rights instruments**" (February 2017) that presented our country's overall activities in the field of human rights protection with regard to the international relevant standards.
 - ❖ In April 2017, the Secretariat General for Media and Communication will host on its premises, an **innovative seminar addressed to journalists and media professionals**, organized by ERT S.A., the Greek Broadcasting Corporation, in the framework of the European Programme "**RespectWords**", along with seven others European broadcasters organizes. The seminar will focus on data management about refugees and migrants and will offer examples of best practices of well-balanced and reliable journalism and also a useful Code of Conduct for handling effectively such issues with due respect for human rights.
 - ❖ In June 2017, the Secretariat General for Media and Communication, the General Secretariat for Transparency and Human Rights and the National Council against Racism and Intolerance will co-organize a day event, regarding the protection of children's rights and specifically the refugee children, in the media.
-

In conclusion, the Secretariat General for Media and Communication, under the Greek Ministry of Digital Policy, Media and Telecommunications, has introduced a **human rights-based approach** in its activities and for this reason places special focus on the **guidance and empowerment** of people employed in the media sector.

The current forms of digital media present new opportunities, such as rapid and useful flow of information, flexible communication channels, digital activism, as well as challenges associated with hate speech phenomena, circulation of offensive material or dissemination of fake news. **Ethics, responsible journalism and media literacy** are critical components that can lead to human rights protection within the media environment. Media literacy is one of the essential tools used for the empowerment of citizens and the development of their critical thinking when they are exposed to media outputs. Codes of ethics, guidelines and relevant training, on the other hand, are bound to direct journalists and media professionals in respecting the human rights dimension while exercising their profession.

As the competent public entity in the media sector, the Secretariat General for Media and Communication is fully aware of the recent developments in the media field in respect of the human rights dimension, constantly supports and offers relevant training and remains vigilant in the dissemination and application of fundamental principles and guidelines that constitute journalism a reliable public function.