



Working Session 8. Citizenship for the Information Society: Media Education and Civic Participation

Partner organizations: International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), UNESCO's Information for All Program and the Asian Media Information and Communication Center (AMIC)

This session was an opportunity to highlight and contextualize media literacy education programs implemented in the education systems of Turkey, Argentina and Finland. It was moderated by Vladimir Gai, from UNESCO's Communication Development Division.

The Alliance of Civilizations' *High-Level Group Report* (November 2006) recognizes the importance of including media literacy education in the schools. Since its publication, the UNAOC has developed a number of initiatives and resources aiming at the inclusion of media education in the National Plans of the countries of the Group of Friends.

Examples of initiatives in Turkey, Argentina and Finland were presented during the session. Turkey's Ministry of Culture has provided professional development workshops in order to train social studies teachers so that they can meet the challenges of delivering effective media literacy education, and discussions were held on ways in which this valuable initiative could be further developed. It was suggested that a possible good source of educators for this course could be graduates from the communication departments of journalism schools.

Argentina's model of media literacy education was also presented and discussed during the working session. Through the program *Escuela y Medios* (School & Media) Argentina's Ministry of Education engages in a series of around the year collaborations with the media industry and the private sector aiming at raising the awareness of the impact that media has in society. The *Escuela y Medios* program includes initiatives such as the production of public service announcements focusing on how to critically watch television, films and surf the Internet; the in-school production of videos written and produced by students for TV broadcast; and the celebration of World Press Freedom Day (May 3rd). During the session's discussion the *Escuela y Medios* program was recognized as a particularly creative and all-compassing model aiming at the development of a *media literate citizen*.

Finland's contribution to the discussion started by reminding the participants that "the future does not just happen – we help to create it though our choices." In some form or other, media education has been part of Finland's national educational curriculum since the early 1970s. Currently the country's focus is in updating and developing teaching materials; providing teaching training to



educators; and the unfolding of *Global Education*, Finland's newest media education program. The program encourages media production in schools as well as a critical analysis approach where the concepts and practice of world citizenship, social inclusion, ethical values, intercultural dialogue and media literacy education are all intertwined within the Global Education curricula. The rich and progressive vision of Finland's model was further explored during the discussion.

Other presentations from the panel included comments on today's fragmented and overwhelming

plethora of media sources, creating a cacophonous media landscape often difficult to navigate for citizens lacking minimum media literacy skills. Ismail Serageldin, reflecting on the role of media and media education in contemporary society, concluded the session by signaling the importance of distinguishing between *knowledge* and *wisdom*, the latter understood as the necessary means for individual reflection and the development of constructive civic participation.

