

Dates: 27 – 29 June 2016

Country: Latvia, Riga



The Media Diversity Institute Western Balkans participated at the [UNESCO Second European Media and Information Forum](#)

. Participants at the event held in Riga on 27-29 June discussed media and information literacy (MIL) in the European media landscape, discussed challenges and reviewed some successful stories of how to empower audience to be more critical and skilful in the digital environment. One of the key conclusions of the Forum is about the substantial lack of knowledge about the 'other' in the media, as well as about the need for intercultural dialogue.

MDI representative Ivana Jelaca presented the situation in the Western Balkans and Serbia in particular, pointing out that freedom of expression faces many challenges such as non-transparent media ownership. „Those challenges affect the way citizens understand media and information they are getting via various media outlets,“ said Jelaca.

„PR people outnumber journalists in the country and this trend illustrates the need for citizens to make distinction between propaganda, spin and genuine information,“ said Jelaca at the UNESCO European MIL Forum. She pointed out the importance of building counter narratives to tackle hate speech and to build culture of non-violent dialogue. Jelaca concluded by calling for greater respect of human rights and MIL education in order to promote the culture of mutual respect among all social groups. European Forum was one of the regional meetings leading up

to the Global MIL Conference that will be held in Sao Paolo in November.

One of the issues debated at the European Forum was the way citizens consume media. Emily Keaney, senior research manager at Ofcom, presented a study showing that almost 20 percent of both young people and adults believe that information obtained online, if it is listed by the search engine, must be true.

UNESCO Forum participants devoted a substantial attention to debate about young people needs. Alton Grizzle, programme specialist at UNESCO, presented global research showing that around 50% of surveyed young people have been exposed to radical content online, mostly on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Also, around half of the surveyed confessed they don't know how to recognise or how to respond to hate speech. Around three quarters reported that they have come across hateful content accidentally, while more than 80% have reported that they have ignored this content. „This leads to the conclusion about youth inactivity,“ highlighted Grizzle, emphasising that being inactive is dangerous. Empathy, the ability to understand and share feelings of the others, was pointed out as a key in building intercultural relations.

The European Forum produced [Riga Recommendations on Media and Information Literacy in a Shifting Media and Information Landscape](#), which reflected on the role of all stakeholders – UNESCO member states, Internet and technological intermediaries, civil sector, educators, journalists in fostering media and information literacy.