

Foreword

In 2005 UNESCO asked the International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media to prepare a publication on “Efforts and Innovative Approaches to Reduce Violence in Electronic and Digital Media”. The present volume presents the results of the work the Clearinghouse has done in response to that request.

Modern information technology has transformed the media landscape and the media culture dramatically over the past decade, offering a steadily swelling flow of material through many new channels. Although there are media, digital and information divides in the world, more and more people have access to an enormous array of knowledge and diversions of many kinds – on television, on the Internet, and in mobile telephones. Many parents, teachers and policy-makers are concerned about the negative influence they believe media exert on children and young people. There is particular concern about depictions of violence in the media. But in today’s world violence is only part of the problem. There are also pornographic films and images, excessive marketing, stereotypical and disrespectful depictions of young people, women and minorities, hate-mongering messages, and so forth. Interactive media like the Internet also imply invitations to risky behaviour in real life in connection with media use. Violence is no longer an adequate heading; today, terms like “harmful media content” or “harm and offence in media content” are more in keeping with the situation. It is this broader term that forms our point of departure in this work.

The Clearinghouse is pleased to have been able to gather a good number of scholars and other experts who, with an eye to the future, present conclusions that can be drawn from the research to date on offensive and potentially harmful media content and the protection of minors. They do so from a variety of perspectives and with most valuable reflections. The title, *Regulation, Awareness, Empowerment* indicates that whenever protection of minors against media content and reducing the amount of harmful media content are discussed, media literacy and information literacy must always be included.

In addition to the reviews of the research literature the Clearinghouse presents different kinds of efforts at raising media and information literacy through examples of activities, projects and resources from many different parts of the world.

I am deeply indebted to all the contributors who have made this publication possible. May I also express my great appreciation of UNESCO's support, without which the publication could not have come into being. It is my hope that the articles and other material collected here will stimulate further debate, inspire new policy approaches and research initiatives on the topic of young people, media culture and offensive and harmful media content.

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