



Manifesto

Right to media literacy

This year, Media Literacy Week (November 21st – 28th 2014) focuses on the rights of children. For instance by means of this manifesto, which we have drawn up in collaboration with children (10 – 12 years old), young people (15-20 years old) and experts. We hope to inspire policy makers, media producers and educators to put the right to media literacy high on the children's rights agenda.

This manifesto is based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child of the United Nations. Children and young people have told us the ten rights they consider to be important in the field of (digital) media. Subsequently, child rights experts and media experts have further detailed these rights.

Complex media society

The Convention on the Rights of the Child of the United Nations was established in 1989, a time in which the media consumption for children was nothing like it is today. The media world consisted mostly of television, radio, newspapers and magazines, and the internet was mainly a tool for scientists. Nowadays, children grow up with internet access and they roam in a complex media society.

The way we communicate has changed drastically as well. Almost everyone is constantly connected to one another and to the internet via their smartphone, laptop or tablet. We make full use of all the possibilities offered by the new media platforms. To children, internet access is a given, and internet users are consistently getting younger, are online more frequently and spend an increasing amount of time there.

Frameworks needed

The media landscape is developing at lightning speed. For that reason, frameworks that allow children to roam free in this media society in an optimal and safe manner are urgently required. The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides these frameworks. Many of the topics children may face up to the age of eighteen, are addressed in this convention. From education, living and health to faith, parents and friends. The ever growing role of media in the life of children remains unaddressed to date, however.

It is about time that this changed, because there are plenty of questions. What are the rights and obligations of children with regard to online bullying? Is playing online the same as playing outside? Are children entitled to online privacy, or should parents be allowed to monitor anything that children do with media? And children entitled to a clean digital slate when they turn 18? In summary: what role should media literacy play within the rights of the child?

Children's Ombudsman

On November 24th 2014, we will hand over this manifesto to Marc Dullaert, the first Children's Ombudsman in the Netherlands. As a Children's Ombudsman, Dullaert checks whether the children's rights are properly honored in the Netherlands. He advises parties within and outside of the political landscape, reports to the Parliament and to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in doing so, improving the position of children and young people in the Netherlands. With this manifesto, we want to inspire the Children's Ombudsman to strongly embrace the right of children to media literacy.



Ten media literate children's rights

Below you'll find the ten rights selected by children and young people, followed by a media literate interpretation. The elaboration on the various rights, with observations and recommendations, reflect the opinions of the children and young people who have contributed to this manifesto. These opinions have been supplemented and detailed by experts.

1. Children are entitled to internet access

(Derived from article 3, Interests of the child)

2. Children are entitled to safe media

(Derived from article 4, Realizing children's rights)

3. Children are entitled to a media literate upbringing

(Derived from article 5, Role of the parents)

4. Children are entitled to media literate education

(Derived from article 6, Right to development and from article 28, Right to education)

5. Children are entitled to online forgetfulness

(Derived from article 8, Respect for identity)

6. Children are entitled to freedom of speech in the media

(Derived from article 13, Freedom of speech)

7. Children are entitled to online privacy

(Derived from article 16, Protection of privacy)

8. Children are entitled to protection against harmful footage and text

(Derived from article 17, Access to information)

9. Children are entitled to online playing

(Derived from article 31, Recreation)

10. Children are entitled to media boundaries

(Derived from article 40, Juvenile Justice System)



Right to media literacy

1. Children are entitled to internet access

(Derived from article 3, Interests of the child)

Observations

- Frequent access to the internet is a necessity for children. Not to an unlimited extent and everywhere, but when and where they have a reason or need to. Children perceive online life as a natural environment in which they play and learn. The experiences they gain contribute to the development of their own identity and benefit their social and emotional development.
- In care institutions, children often have limited access to the internet. This can be the result of a limited number of available computers or of a lack of personal assistance.
- For many children with a visual or auditory disability, surfing the web is extremely difficult. Their needs are hardly ever taken into account.
- Children don't make a distinction between children with or without disability and / or children in different living conditions. That is why access to the internet and use of media must be equal for everyone.

Recommendation

- Children in juvenile institutions, refugee centers, hospitals and children from poor families must be given the opportunity to be online frequently.
- Internet must be accessible for all children, including children with disabilities.
- Access to the internet must be safe however. This applies to public Wi-Fi networks for instance which are accessible to anyone and to preventing viruses by means of firewalls. The government has an important task in the field of information provision, regulations and providing technical facilities.

2. Children are entitled to safe media

(Derived from article 4, Realizing children's rights)

Observations

- Both the safe use of media (protection against viruses, hacking, identity theft etc) and the social safety on the internet (protection against grooming, sexting, cyber bullying etc) are important matters to children.
- Before the digital age, the situation was quite clear: both in the classroom and in the schoolyard, the school was responsible for the safety of the child. Today however, the virtual and real world are blended into one, as is the associated social interaction. Because of this, the right of children to safe media has become a shared responsibility of parents, schools, media producers and the government.
- Children have great confidence in the government, media producers, police and the educational system. It is because of this confidence, that these parties have a serious responsibility to actually act in a reliable manner. Children indicate that they wish to be protected, allowing them to use media in a safe and shielded manner.

Recommendations

- The government has a preventive, informational and correcting role in the protection of children in their online activities. Children indicate that they would like to see a special 'internet juvenile police' that monitors what happens on the internet and that has online consultation hours on digital platforms where a lot of children roam. A



connection can be made to existing aid, such as the Child Pornography Alert Hotline (Meldpunt Kinderporno), Helpwanted.nl and Pestweb (Bully Web).

- According to children, the government can make the internet safer by configuring a portion of the web especially for children.
- Media producers must make sure that child-oriented media services (social media, apps, games etc), meet all preconditions for safe media consumption by children. For instance by providing extra security for the accounts containing personal information of children, by placing a police button on every social media site and by formulating the terms of use for child-oriented media in such a way that children can understand them. Children want to be involved in drawing up and detailing these preconditions.

3. Children are entitled to a media literate upbringing

(Derived from article 5, Role of the parents)

Observations

- Media literacy is about the conscious and active deployment of all available media – digital and analog – to increase the quality of your own life and to make sure that you can participate in the world around you to an optimal extent. Children see their parents as examples and tend to copy their behavior.
- In general children are not afraid to ask their parents questions, but they have little confidence in the media skills of their parents. This is where opportunities are hidden: children often know exactly how social media works and are more than willing to teach their parents.
- Enthusiastic and proud (grand) parents are hardly aware on social media of the impact of their online actions. They tend to share everything via social media. Children do not always appreciate this.

Recommendations

- Parents must show interest into the online behavior of their children and talk to them about this.
- Parents should be more careful with regard to posting photos and other information about their children on the internet or social media. This helps prevent long and short term violation of the privacy of the children. In addition, parents should always ask their children whether they can post something online about them and they should respect the choices of their children.

4. Children are entitled to media literate education

(Derived from article 6, Right to development and from article 28, Right to education)

Observations

- At school, children can learn various media literacy competencies. These vary from understanding (for instance by realizing how media affect reality), use (such as learning shoot a video or learning how to program), communication (dealing with social media, but also smart search and find methods), to strategic skills. In this, children learn to assume a critical attitude, to reflect on their own behavior and to actively and consciously use the media for a specific goal.
- The teacher plays a crucial role in making the students more media aware: only a media literate teacher, can teach media literacy.
- By using (social) media, the curriculum can be better tuned to the perception of the child. This way, education can teach children to collaborate and communicate differently.



- Children indicate that different ages involve different responsibilities for children. The biggest change in responsibility takes place in the transition from primary education to secondary education. This transition should be associated with advanced media literacy.

Recommendations

- Make every school teach media literacy, meaning the active and aware participation in the media society. This includes a critical consideration of media, gaining (technical) user skills such as programming and the ability to express oneself verbally in the media. Without these competencies, children will get behind when they grow up, which involves the risk of losing touch with society.
- The ICT policy of the school must be media literate as well. For instance by explicitly disclosing what details of children are included in the privacy policy, who has access to them and what happens to the files when children switch to other schools, external collaboration partners and participation bodies.
- Schools can involve parents in making children media literate and vice versa. Get children to teach a media literacy class to parents. That won't just be an educational experience for the parents, but for the children as well. Schools can also help parents by offering a shielded platform on the school website. On such a platform, parents can support each other and alert each other to new developments.
- Once a year, make the school focus on media literacy and involve (grand) parents in this.

5. Children are entitled to online forgetfulness

(Derived from article 8, Respect for identity)

Observations

- Children have the right to make mistakes, both offline and online. It is by making mistakes, that children learn how the world works and how they can act wisely and make the right choices. Shielding them too much, makes children more vulnerable online.
- Children can be haunted for the rest of their lives for mistakes they made online, which can cause extensive psychological damage. The same goes for damaging information about children placed online by others.
- Children want to be in control of the information available about them online, where possible. This means that they want to choose who they accept on social media and who is able to see what about them.

Recommendations

- Make media producers ensure that children are the owner of any content posted and produced by them. This gives them more control over their online identity. The same goes for content about children posted online by others. Children like to see this content labeled with their name, so that they receive a notification when someone does something with this content. In addition, children can be given more control if request to remove certain information about them, are actually granted.
- The government should ensure that children can start with a clean slate at the age of 18, and are able to delete their online history. Make sure that the online history can be wiped at the age of 18, just like a criminal record. This way, mistakes made by children in their youth, won't haunt them forever.
- Appoint a media court with whom children can claim these rights. It can act when the rights of one child go against the right of another child, for instance with regard to the freedom of speech.

6. Children are entitled to freedom of speech in the media

(Derived from article 13, Freedom of speech)



Observations

- Children feel that they have the right to express themselves in the media as they see fit, provided that they do not cause any harm to others.
- The internet has codes of conduct and forms of interaction that differ from those in the offline world. Children often respond impulsively online with less room for nuances, due to which something can easily be misunderstood. At the same time, children correct situations quickly and want to fix things. They realize that certain unpleasant situations can never be fixed.
- Children indicate that they want extra assistance in helping them think before they post something online. For instance by asking 'Do you really wish to post this?' by default, on websites.'

Recommendations

- Teach children how to behave as senders of information, and formulate clear online codes of conduct focused on things such as discrimination, cyber bullying or sexual harassment. The parents, schools and the government have a shared responsibility in this.
- Give children a little push in the direction of desired online behavior. For instance, install a filter to prevent the use of swear words on the internet. This is already standard practice in many games. Or encircle an offensive word and ask children whether they truly wish to use this word.

7. Children are entitled to online privacy

(Derived from article 16, Protection of privacy)

Observations

- Children are much less worried about their privacy than adults. They are uninhibited and have great confidence in others. Children don't really understand how and why some organizations gather data and what they can do with the gathered information.
- Children are used to post a lot of things about themselves online. Often, they are unable to oversee the consequences of certain content, such as a photo taken in a swimming pool.
- In abuse situations, media often describe the child in an identifiable manner. Journalists can write about what school someone attends for instance, without permission. Classmates often effortlessly recognize the children described, often with serious consequences.

Recommendations

- Investigate why it is that children are less concerned about their privacy than adults. Is that because of intrinsic factors, because of age? Or is it more related to too protected media upbringing?
- The government must formulate regulations to assure the privacy of children and to restrict the use of data about children.
- The media must actively monitor the right of children to remain an anonymous victim or perpetrator. Create a media code that dictates that when covering matter about children, these children must be unrecognizable. This should also apply to online media.

8. Children are entitled to protection against harmful footage and text

(Derived from article 17, Access to information)



Observation

- Children are too easily confronted with footage or text they do not wish to see. Some actually look for it, but most children are simply confronted with it. They perceive this to be very harmful. Young children in particular must be protected against horrible (or sexually) implicit footage where possible.
- Many of the current verification systems are useless: children simply lie about their age.

Recommendations

- As a producer of digital media – issue children a warning and allow them time to reconsider before they are confronted with harmful footage. For instance by building in a delay or by asking a question before a page with this kind of footage is shown.
- Create a smart way to verify the age of children. This should be done independently from the identity of the child, preserving their privacy.
- Protect children against pages with horrible footage, by means of filters or a lock.
- Draw up guidelines for all news items focused on children.

9. Children are entitled to online playing

(Derived from article 31, Recreation)

Observations

- There are a lot of exciting playgrounds for children on the Internet, such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Minecraft, YouTube and Snapchat. They like to visit these places, meet one another and explore. That is why these are perfect places for children.
- To ensure the healthy development of children, it is essential for them to have the possibility to play online. Gaming and chatting is part of the social interaction between children. Getting together and creating or building together, are things that can also be learned digitally. This benefits their personal development, their social skills and prepares them for participation in the media society.
- Children require a certain level of freedom to be able play. It doesn't help when others are able to constantly monitor their game, it causes children to lose their candor. Compare this to the sandpit: it doesn't help if you constantly film or monitor children there either.

Recommendations

- Producers of games and social media that are partly focused on children, must be transparent about their work method and take responsibility so that children can experiment on these platforms in a safe and selfless manner. Where necessary, the government could provide supervision.
- The digital environment in which children play must be free of commercial messages, allowing children to truly explore in a care-free manner. In other words: without marketers that affect children with advertising to make purchases within apps or online games.
- The government must apply stricter inspections with regard to providers that focus on the online 'playgrounds' of children.

10. Children are entitled to media boundaries (Derived from article 40, Juvenile Justice System)

Observations



- Children are not always able to control themselves and have a hard time letting go of gaming or the computer.
- Children need periods of media rest. They are very aware of this themselves. Therefore, the appreciate educators defining clear boundaries. It helps them say no to friends and it helps them be offline frequently.

Recommendations

- Parents must define clear rules about the use of media within the family. For instance about the amount of time children get to invest in gaming or being on the computer. And give them moments of rest as well. Of course, parents have to set the right example with regard to these media rules.

Afterword

The Convention on the Rights of the Child of the United Nations is an assignment for everyone in society. A lot has changed in the moment 25 years ago, when this document was drawn up – in particular in the field of media. With this manifesto, we hope to give the right to media literacy a prominent place on the children’s rights agenda. We have tried to do this by formulating ten media literate variants of existing child rights in collaboration with children, young people and experts. With that, we hope to inspire parties that play an important role in the lives of children. Parties such as the government, media producers, teachers, educators and children themselves.

The conversations we held with children, proved once more how much confidence children have in adults. Not just in their parents and teachers, but also in media producers and the government. All these parties have a huge responsibility in making sure that children deal with all possibilities offered by the current media society in a wise manner. To let children free where possible, and to protect them where necessary. And to make media literate decisions themselves.

In drawing up this manifesto, it quickly became clear that we couldn’t stop at simply formulating rights. Each right chosen by children appeared to invoke the need for recommendations. With these recommendations, we hope to provide a starting point. For recalibrating the policy, for refreshing curriculum, establishing supervision, conducting interviews and creating awareness. With this manifesto, we ask attention for the children of today, with the assignment of yesterday.