[GB] UK Regulator Expands Media Literacy Activities

IRIS 2019-8:1/26

Alexandros K. Antoniou
University of Essex

On 18 July 2019, Ofcom, the UK's communications regulator, announced the launch of a media literacy network and the creation of a media literacy advisory panel as part of its "Making Sense of Media" programme.

As Ofcom points out, "in an online environment, where the possibility for direct content regulation diminishes, the need for a media-literate public increases." The regulator's "Making Sense of Media" programme aims to help adults and children in the UK acquire the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to make use of traditional and new communication services. The programme builds on a significant body of research into media use and media reception, and relies on a strong stakeholder network for sharing information and ideas.

The newly launched programme will bring together expert individuals and organisations in order to develop effective online media literacy interventions. It is anticipated that the network will be involved in a variety of related activities such as informing people of the benefits and risks of online activities, sharing findings regarding individuals' understanding, and use of electronic media, and identifying priority areas for robust research.

The Ofcom programme will also be supported by the Making Sense of Media Advisory Panel, which will meet quarterly to debate and inform the development of Ofcom's media literacy policy. Although the panel is still taking shape, it is currently composed of 11 expert representatives from the industry, academia and the third sector. Its members are expected to identify new research areas, share best practice from across the UK and internationally, and consider the best ways to evaluate the impact of media literacy activities on people's skills and critical thinking.

The establishment of the advisory panel and network are welcome steps forward in promoting citizens' and consumers' media literacy. With these new initiatives, Ofcom joins other national regulatory authorities that have previously led or supported the development of media literacy networks, such as the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, Croatia's Agency for Electronic Media and the Norwegian Media Authority.

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

Ofcom - Making Sense of Media

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media-literacy-research

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026