# Do We Need Net Neutrality Regulation in Europe?

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## Why is it important to approach the Network Neutrality debate from the media and information literacy perspective?

We are so saturated with media today that we often do not notice that we are constantly exposed to different messages, which become more and more powerful with the development of information technologies. We can easily be misinformed. Meanwhile, a healthy democracy relies on informed citizens, who need correct information to make better decisions.

Being instruments of social and political change, media seek to promote certain values. Consequently, our opinions and attitudes are shaped by what we watch or read.

To be able to promote our interests and safeguard our rights, we need to navigate through thousands of messages from the advertising industry, commercial promotions, political parties, etc.

Yet, economic barriers to different digital media platforms can exclude many people from a considerable proportion of the information available online.

Would ISPs exercise control by influencing messages or the tools for interpreting these messages and determining the underlying values? I am leaving the question open.




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## What will be the impact of tiered access on citizens' media literacy or information literacy skills?

Three areas of competence make up media literacy: the ability to access content, the capacity for critical evaluation of the content (its truthfulness, the interests of broadcasters or other content producers), and the ability to produce and communicate information and knowledge (communicative and participative skills, content creation capacity).

If Network Neutrality is not protected, we will have different levels of access to media content, which will depend on people's ability to pay, the platform or ISP they use, and the geographical area they live in.

Meanwhile, access to a plurality of sources of information on diverse media platforms is a precondition for the development of users' competences.

If citizens have the opportunity to compare and analyze information from various sources and platforms, they are more likely to develop critical thinking skills.

It is not easy to make independent judgments in a 'purified' environment of prioritized news and information. Moreover, the plurality of sources, media content, and platforms definitely strengthens content creation capacity and social communication skills.

People's capacity to process information nowadays is becoming increasingly unequal: people in the developed world exchange many times as much information as people in the developing world. New economic barriers to different media platforms can isolate many people and restrict their ability to communicate information and knowledge to others.

Armenia is a new democracy, where the most successful initiatives come from the grassroots. Today, the Internet is accessible to 50 percent of Armenia's population and is the main source of information for 31 percent of the population. New media is gaining a firm foothold in Armenian democracy, and recent parliamentary elections have demonstrated that.

The elections took place in a very transparent environment thanks to citizen journalism: a number of online tools and platforms ensured transparency and turned ordinary people with mobile devices into real observers.

Armenian people, who 20 years ago gained freedom from totalitarianism and censorship in the media, would never want to see the old scenario revived.