

PRINT is vital for critical thinking

October 2019

The use of mobile devices and social media for accessing news articles continues to increase. However, new research reveals that – regardless of age – readers’ comprehension of long informational texts is better on paper. It is therefore vital that we ensure that press, magazines and educational books, will continue to be published in print in the future.

While mobile devices and e-readers have had a surge in popularity, research published in 2019 proves that reading on paper still has its unique advantages. A group of scientists looked at the impact that digitisation has on reading practices by analysing 54 studies with more than 170,000 participants¹. They found that comprehension of long-form informational text is stronger when reading on paper than reading on screens, particularly when the reader is under time pressure. Other studies show that despite the popularity and accessibility of digital products, paper continues to be the preferred reading method for consumers, especially for long texts². Reading on paper has proven advantages including helping readers with their cognitive ability, concentration and retention, and building vocabulary and memory.

Living in a time of constant digital distraction, it is vital we preserve the proven benefits of print, especially when it comes to the content of newspapers and magazines that encourage in-depth reading. This form of reading is essential for European citizens to understand and form opinions of today's political, economic and social situation in the world. Intergraf therefore calls on policy makers to not only raise awareness of the benefits of printed over digital media for informational texts, but to ensure that policy does not actively favour digital products when the benefits of reading print are so clear. Policymakers should also pay close attention to the direct relevance of these findings to the democratic engagement of society. In-depth reading is essential to understand and form opinions about the current political and economic environment. If digital media continues to grow at the expense of print, Europe could suffer from a less informed, less engaged electorate.

Immediate action is needed at all levels to ensure that content made available by newspapers and magazines continues to be published in print. It is everyone's responsibility to promote printed magazines, newspapers and educational books which have been proven to facilitate comprehension and develop critical thinking.

¹ For more information please read COST Action E-READ initiative (www.ereadcost.eu)

² Busting the Myths about Print and Paper, Two Sides, 2019 (www.twosides.info)



Intergraf and the Board of WAN-IFRA's World Printers Forum call on the European Commission to:

- Recognise the proven advantages of printed press, magazines and educational books for better understanding of the subject matter and thus enabling the development of critical thinking;
- Refrain from a digital-only approach in the field of education and press;
- Promote the use of printed materials in schools and other education environments unless there is a proven learning advantage of digital;
- Support further independent research that measures the effects of digitisation on reading comprehension and critical thinking skills.

Intergraf is the European federation for print and digital communication. We are a Brussels-based trade association representing employers in the European printing industry. Intergraf represents 21 national printing federations in 20 countries. Our primary task is to represent and advocate for the interests of the printing and digital communication industry in Europe, working with European Union to support the sector's competitiveness through advocacy, information-sharing, networking and social dialogue. The printing industry in the 28 European countries comprises some 117,000 firms and employs around 637,000 people. The turnover in the printing industry is about € 85 billion. The industry throughout Europe consists mainly of small enterprises, as 90% of them employ fewer than 20 persons. For more information, please visit: <http://www.intergraf.eu>

The World Printers Forum is the print community within the World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA). It advises WAN-IFRA in all aspects of the printed newspaper. WAN-IFRA represents worldwide more than 18,000 publications, 15,000 online sites and over 3,000 companies in more than 120 countries. WAN-IFRA supports the newspaper industry worldwide in the defence and promotion of press freedom, quality journalism and editorial integrity. WAN-IFRA offers its members a broad spectrum of professional events, publications and research reports. The Association acts in addition as a worldwide platform for ideas, information and experiences. If you need more information you can find it here: www.wan-ifra.org