Audiovisual and information services: protection of minors and human dignity. Green Paper

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The two basic issues which are faced by the new media services are what content is to be permitted and how is this content to be regulated. Of all the mechanisms available to users of the new media services the rating and labelling systems (i.e. classification/codification) appear to offer the most effective means of content control as they will indicate whether a particular site normally contains illegal and/or harmful content and what sort of illegal and/or harmful content it is. Because of the global nature of the new media services all content (including both illegal and harmful content) will need to be rated/labelled because what constitutes illegal content in one country may not constitute illegal content in another country. Where there is a risk that content which is illegal in a certain country will be received and accessed in that country a mechanism such as or similar to a territory statement would help in minimizing that risk. As far as the protection of minors and human dignity is concerned the legislative and regulatory framework for illegal and harmful content on the new media services which is published and distributed by means of the "closed" systems such as VOD should either come under the existing legislative and regulatory principles and a framework of existing media such as television or should be based heavily on such legislative and regulatory principles and framework. Illegal and harmful content on the new media services which is published and distributed by means of the "open" systems such as the Internet should be subject to specific legislation, regulation and sanctions. There will need to be improved international collaboration in the development, coordination and enforcement of legislation, regulation and sanctions. Harmful content is to be dealt with both by improving parents/educators awareness of content and by introducing technologies to exercise control.