Audiovisual industry and information: protection of minors and human dignity. Evaluation report

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The committee adopted the report by Christopher BEAZLEY (EPP-ED, UK) on the Commission's Evaluation Report. It noted that children's welfare was primarily the responsibility of their legal guardians, though this did not absolve suppliers and distributors of audiovisual content, nor drafters of legislation, from their responsibilities. The committee favoured self-regulation by the industry and was concerned at recent moves to block access to certain websites, saying that such drastic measures did not solve the problem of sites outside the EU nor that of sites which were legal for adults but could be harmful to children or young people nor the question of fragmented access to the internet. By contrast, the emergence of service providers' self-regulation facilities in the Member States was welcomed and MEPs called on the Commission to promote and support networking and exchanges of experience between these bodies. With reference to the 1999 action plan to promote safer use of the internet, the committee called on the Member States to set up hotlines to handle complaints about illegal or harmful content. It also believed that consumer groups, voluntary associations and NGOs should be more closely involved in the implementation of the 1998 Council recommendation on the protection of minors and human dignity. MEPs further highlighted the need for greater cooperation at European and international levels to combat illegal content. In addition, the committee wanted the DVB (Digital Video Broadcasting) consortium to work on the development of reliable filter and rating systems for digital broadcasting, while the Commission was urged to promote the creation of user-friendly content filter systems at affordable prices so as to support parental control. However, the committee said that technical measures were no substitute for making service providers liable for the content they provide and that consequently such providers should be legally required to comply with rules designed to protect minors from harmful content.