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

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PURPOSE : to present the evaluation report from the Commission on the application of the Council Recommendation 98/560/EC of 24 September 1998 concerning the protection of minors and human dignity. CONTENT : the Recommendation invites the Member States, industries and parties concerned and the Commission to take step to enhance the protection of minors and human dignity in the broadcasting and Internet sectors. The need for the establishment of a safe environment has recently been stressed by the European Parliament when it adopted the above-mentioned resolution on Parental Control. Overall, after 2 years, the results of the application of the Recommendation are encouraging, although interested parties and in particular consumers should have been more involved in the establishment if codes of conduct. The Member States have applied the Recommendation in a heterogeneous way; nevertheless it should be stressed that most of the Member States have launched campaigns for a safer use of the internet and that some have introduced new legislation or supported measures such as hotlines to the police to deal with child pornography. The heterogenity of the measures is not surprising, taking into account both cultural heterogeneity and the variation in development of Internet. Industry, in particular through ICRA, is working on the development of reliable filter and rating systems for Internet which can be individually adapted to the cultural values of citizens in the different Member States. As far as digital broadcasting is concerned, work by the industry is less developed. The DVB has expressed to the Commission its willingness to lead efforts in this area provided the European legislator gives a clear sign to the industry. Lastly, the results of the Report show that the challenges are to be met with respect to the protection of minors and human dignity across all the media, be it Internet, broadcasting, videogames or supports like videocassettes and DVDs. Renewed efforts need to be made to ensure a coherent approach, in particular as convergence will continue to increase, with Internet TV, interactive broadcasting or downloading of videogames from the Internet. The involvement of users including consumers should also be encouraged. Approaches like the establishment of the Dutch NICAM-Institute and the British Communications White Paper demonstrate that much can be achieved under coregulation or self-regulation and may constitute an orientation for further implementation of the Recommendation.