

Internet: multiannual action plan on promoting safer use

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The recommendation at second reading) by Gerhard SCHMID (PES, D) on a Community action plan to promote safe use of the Internet has been adopted by the Committee. The committee emphasises Parliament's wish for rules to be established which will ensure that the Internet is used safely. The Council has altered the Commission's proposal (the Commission had taken on board most of Parliament's amendments, i.e. 20 out of 23), by tightening it up and by changing its wording. It has removed all references to cooperation in the area of justice by deleting parts of the text and making clarifications (the references to the need for legislative harmonisation have, for example, been removed from the text and the conduct of preparatory studies made explicitly subject to decisions of the committee composed of Member State representatives which is responsible for implementation of the programme). The Council - consistently from its standpoint - has rejected all amendments relating to the programme committee or judicial cooperation. Regrettably (according to the rapporteur), it has also refused, quite unnecessarily, to accept the proposal for a quality labelling system for Internet suppliers. The rapporteur therefore wants Parliament to retable the demands it made in four areas: -support should be given under the action plan to organisations active in the protection of human rights and in counteracting violence against and abuse of women and children; -the most effective means should be used for disseminating information to raise user awareness; -Internet providers who voluntarily keep to a code of conduct agreed within the industry on undesirable website content (pornography, glorification of violence, racism, etc) should be able to apply to the Commission for a quality label; -civil and criminal law within the EU will have to be harmonised with the aim of ensuring safer use of the Internet.