Parental control of television broadcasting

1999/2210(COS) - 19/07/1999 - Non-legislative basic document

OBJECTIVE: Commission Communication on a Study on Parental Control of Television Broadcasting

CONTENT: The study was carried out as required by Article 22b.2 of the amended Television without Frontiers Directive. The study reaffirms the importance accorded to the protection of minors and considers that a significant public interest lies in protecting children from viewing excessive television violence and other programming that may produce harmful effects. Its main conclusions are:

- The explosion in the number of channels in Europe, many of them cross-border channels, in a multi-set digital era makes it more difficult for regulators to monitor broadcasters· compliance with programming standards based on cultural sensitivities.
- The adoption of 'V-chip' technology is not technically feasible in Europe. In any event, digital technology offers the opportunity to develop far more sophisticated and secure filtering systems. The Commission will discuss this in the framework of its regular contacts with Digital Video Broadcasting (DGV).
- Technical measures are not a complete substitute for broadcaster responsibility, although they make a valuable contribution with regard to encrypted services such as pay-TV. Broadcaster responsibility must be maintained, and methods such as the 'watershed' must remain effective.
- A harmonised approach to rating audiovisual content is excluded because of the cultural diversity of the European market. The study approves of the drawing up of common descriptive criteria, which would leave the evaluation of content to the competent national authorities.
- Rating systems used in the different media should be brought more into line with each other.

The Commission will pursue the development and promotion of descriptive ratings systems adapted to the digital environment.