

Audiovisual and information industries, competitiveness: protection of minors and human dignity and right of reply

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Marielle DE SARNEZ (ALDE, FR) by an overwhelming majority and made several new recommendations:

- the creation of a new top-level domain name ".kid" with content reserved for children, which could provide a secure internet area regularly monitored by an independent authority;
- the introduction of a European free telephone service providing existing information on existing filter methods and making it easier to lodge complaints with the relevant authorities or report dangerous sites;
- the organisation of a European information campaign aimed at citizens, using all communication media, to alert public opinion to the potential dangers of the internet and the risk of criminal penalties being incurred;
- the systematic provision of an effective and easy-to-use filtering system for users at the time of subscription to an access provider and developing effective filtering solutions, taking into account technological progress allowing Internet access via mobile telephones;
- serious actions to combat child pornography on the Internet- offering access services intended specifically for children and equipped with an automatic filtering system operated by access providers and by mobile telephone operators;
- posting of warning banners on all search engines drawing attention to possible dangers and to the availability of telephone hotlines;
- continuing education of educators and teachers, in liaison with child protection associations, on how to use the Internet in the context of school education and on teaching methods for safe (secure) use which children must be taught;
- introduction of specific Internet training aimed at children from a very early age, including sessions open to parents, so as to explain to children and parents how to use the Internet and how to avoid the pitfalls and dangers;
- an integrated educational approach forming a permanent part of school curricula, and media literacy programmes, so as to maintain awareness of the dangers of the Internet, with particular regard to chat rooms and forums;
- distribution of information packs on the dangers of the Internet ("How to surf the Internet safely", "how to filter unwanted messages") and on the use of hotlines to which reports or complaints concerning harmful or illegal sites can be made.

Parliament also recommended that the industry, all parties concerned and the national and European

authorities consider more actively the technical and legal feasibility of developing a uniform content labelling system to encourage better filtering and classification at source, regardless of the communications media used (Internet, mobile telephones).

Member States are to submit a report to the Commission on measures taken in application of this Recommendation two years after its adoption.

By 31 December 2008, on the basis of the reports submitted by the Member States, the Commission will submit to the European Parliament a report on the implementation and effectiveness of the measures laid down in this recommendation, identifying any additional measures which may be necessary, including binding legislation at European level.

Finally, Parliament added some recommendations on the scope of the right of reply. The reply should be given the same prominence as was given to the contested assertion in order for it to reach the same public and with the same impact. Member States must ensure that the effective exercise of the right of reply (or equivalent remedy) and the right of freedom of expression is not unjustifiably constrained. The reply must be transmitted within a reasonable time after the justification of the request and at a time and in a manner appropriate to the publication or programme to which the request refers.