

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

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PURPOSE: to invite the Member States, industry and other parties concerned, as well as the Commission, to take measures to improve the protection of minors and human dignity in the European audiovisual and on-line information services sectors.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Recommendation 2006/952/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on the protection of minors and human dignity and on the right of reply in relation to the competitiveness of the European audiovisual and on-line information services industry.

CONTENT: The Recommendation builds upon the previous Recommendation 98/560/EC which remains in force. It extends its scope so as to cover media education, the rating or classification of audiovisual content, the portrayal of the sexes in the media and advertising, and the right of reply in relation to online media.

The Council and the European Parliament recommend that the Member States take the necessary measures to the protection of minors and human dignity in all audiovisual and online information services by:

- considering the introduction of measures into their domestic law or practice regarding the right of reply or equivalent remedies in relation to on-line media;
- promoting in close cooperation with the parties concerned: (a) action to enable minors to make responsible use of audiovisual and on-line information services, notably by improving the level of awareness among parents, teachers and trainers of the potential of the new services and of the means whereby they may be made safe for minors; (b) action to facilitate, where appropriate and necessary, the identification of, and access to, quality content and services for minors, including through the provision of means of access in educational establishments and public places; (c) action to inform citizens more about the possibilities offered by the Internet;
- promoting a responsible attitude on the part of professionals, intermediaries and users of new communication media such as the Internet by: (a) encouraging the audiovisual and on-line information services industry, without infringing freedom of expression or of the press, to avoid all discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, in all audiovisual and on-line information services, and to combat such discrimination; (b) encouraging vigilance and the reporting of pages considered illegal; (c) drawing up a code of conduct in cooperation with professionals and regulatory authorities at national and Community level;
- promoting measures to combat all illegal activities harmful to minors on the Internet and make the Internet a much more secure medium. Consideration could be given to the following measures: (a) adopting a quality label for service providers, so that users can easily check whether or not a given provider subscribes to a code of conduct; (b) establishing appropriate means for the reporting of illegal and/or suspicious activities on the Internet.

The audiovisual and on-line information services industry and other parties concerned are called upon to:

- develop positive measures for the benefit of minors, including initiatives to facilitate their wider access to audiovisual and on-line information services, while avoiding potentially harmful content, for instance by means of filtering systems. Such measures could include harmonisation through cooperation between the regulatory, self-regulatory and co-regulatory bodies of the Member States, and through the exchange of best practices concerning such issues as a system of common descriptive symbols or warning messages indicating the age category and/or which aspects of the content have led to a certain age recommendation;
- examine the possibility of creating filters which would prevent information offending against human dignity from passing through the Internet;
- develop measures to increase the use of content labelling systems for material distributed over the Internet;
- consider effective means of avoiding and combating discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation in audiovisual and on-line information services and of promoting a diversified and realistic picture of the skills and potential of men and women in society.