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The over-sexualisation of children

Motion for a resolution

tabled by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

The over-sexualisation of children is a widespread phenomenon in society today, largely down to the influence of the media and the new information and communication technologies. Sexualised and seductive representations of the body, often of young girls, are usually destined for distribution as images via a variety of communication media (television, Internet, smartphones etc), which exacerbates the problem: the sexual and inappropriate depiction of children has become commonplace. In this way, over-sexualisation gives rise to certain sexual practices among teenagers using communication technologies (such as "sexting") and exposes children to inappropriate sexual and pornographic content which has become virtually omnipresent on the Internet.

Since sexualised images of children are often based on adult fantasies and stereotypes or are of a violent nature, their production and consumption may engender psychological and physical risks for children and may result in trauma, sexual violence or serious pathological conditions (depression, anorexia, etc.) and ultimately suicide.

Besides the parents, families and teachers, the State and the business sector must also face up to their responsibilities in order to protect children from these phenomena. The governments of all Council of Europe member States should draw on the example of France, which recently tightened up its legislation, and take legislative, political and administrative measures, step up the gathering of data, raise the awareness of all the parties concerned, make the media industry accountable and set up educational programmes focusing on sexuality and sexual relations suited to different age-groups in all schools. The Parliamentary Assembly should highlight the good practices of States and ensure that they are promoted through the future Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2019).

