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Violence in and through the media

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 2048 (2014)

Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2048 (2014) on “Violence in and through the media”, which it communicated to the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI), the Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE), the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) and the European Committee for Social Cohesion, Human Dignity and Equality (CDDECS), for information and possible comments.

2. The Committee of Ministers welcomes the Assembly’s strong support for the Council of Europe’s youth campaign against hate speech online. It is pleased to inform the Assembly that forming part of the Council of Europe action against radicalisation leading to terrorism,² this campaign, which also has a strong support among member States, will be prolonged.

3. The Committee of Ministers underlines that a comprehensive approach based on human rights is the most effective strategy against the proliferation of violence and harmful content. Among other measures, classification of content is a useful tool to inform parents and young people about the content of various products available. Ideally, the best and most sustainable method to respond to this would be through effective self-regulation. However, recent developments have shown that self-regulation has not always risen to the challenges posed. The Committee therefore considers that co-regulation of the media and various providers and platforms remains an alternative approach to respond to the risks of the new information and communication environment. It agrees with the Assembly that active international co-operation, including exchange of information among competent authorities relating to content classification and the handling of complaints as well as good practice examples, is of particular relevance in this respect.

4. The Committee of Ministers has adopted a number of standards dealing with media violence and its effects on society. It recalls its Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)5 to member States on measures to protect children against harmful content and behaviour and to promote their active participation in the new information and communication environment according to which “States [...] have [the] right, and even an obligation, to protect children from content which is unsuitable or inappropriate”. The Committee also draws attention to the Human Rights Guidelines for online game providers developed by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the Interactive Software Federation of Europe.

5. In this context, the Committee of Ministers also recalls the system of rating of the Pan-European Game Information (PEGI), existing for some years and recognised at European level, which mentions the ages recommended for games and provides indications on their contents.

1. Adopted at the 1231st meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies (17 June 2015).

2. The Council of Europe recently adopted a range of documents aimed at combating radicalisation and violent extremism leading to terrorism, in particular an Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, an Action Plan on “The fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism”, as well as a Declaration of the Committee of Ministers “United around our principles against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism” (125th Session of the Committee of Ministers, Brussels, 19 May 2015).



6. Stereotyping feeds into discrimination and presents a serious obstacle to the achievement of real equality and cohesion in societies. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) requires States Parties to encourage the media to pursue policies to promote equality between women and men and combat gender stereotypes. The Committee further recalls that its Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 on gender equality and media contains concrete guidelines which call on member States to adopt an appropriate legal framework intended to ensure respect for the principle of human dignity and prohibition of all discrimination on grounds of sex, as well as of incitement to hatred and to any form of gender-based violence within the media.

7. The Committee of Ministers notes that the CDMSI will continue working on the issues covered by the Assembly's recommendation. In particular, it has agreed to create a drafting committee on professional and ethical journalism, which will cover some of the issues raised in the Assembly's recommendation and resolution. The steering committee will furthermore envisage actions in some of the fields mentioned in these documents when developing the new Internet Governance Strategy of the Council of Europe 2016-2019. Likewise, the CDDECS will bring the recommendation to the attention of the Committee of Experts on the Strategy for the Rights of Children (DECS-ENF), in order that the latter may pay adequate attention to the issue of violence and stereotyping in media when preparing the next Strategy for the Rights of the Child beyond 2015. The Committee of Ministers also observes that the Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 specifies that the Council of Europe action will focus on promoting and disseminating education syllabuses and teaching practices which are free from explicit and implicit gender stereotypes.

8. The Committee of Ministers draws attention to the draft Council of Europe Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events that is being prepared. Sport is a widely covered activity in the press and broadcasting media and therefore has a large potential for transmitting values. The draft convention aims at reducing violence in every aspect, including violent images in sport, as well as promoting key sporting principles such as tolerance, respect and fair play.

9. Finally, the Committee would like to emphasise the activities undertaken in the educational field by the CDPPE contributing to ensuring a safe school environment and responding to the concerns expressed by the Assembly by providing practical guidance to parents, teachers and providers of media services and products on how to deal with violence in the media and its effects on individuals and society as a whole and how to counteract its potential harmful impact.

10. The Committee of Ministers invites the governments of member States to forward the Assembly's recommendation and Resolution 2001 (2014) on violence in and through the media to their regulatory authorities and public service broadcasters for information.