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(Final version)

Fighting the over-sexualisation of children

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A. Draft Resolution

1. Mass media, marketing campaigns, television programmes and everyday products regularly “over-sexualise” children, particularly girls, by conveying images which portray women, men and in some cases even children, as sexual objects. Ease of access to unsuitable, pornographic, and even illegal content on the Internet threatens the innocence and privacy of children. The phenomenon of “sexting” (the sharing of sexually explicit images via mobile devices or other means on the Internet) has swept through Europe’s schools, often leading to significant psychological trauma. These are just a few examples of subtle and unsubtle sexual pressures that today’s children face in an over-sexualised environment.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly is very concerned about the over-sexualisation of children, which has a significant influence on their perception of society at large as well as on their own self-perception. The over-sexualisation of children can have a severe impact on their self-esteem, well-being, relationships, equal opportunities and achievements in school. In some cases, it can lead to sexual violence and be severely detrimental to their physical and mental health.
3. Action is needed urgently before these trends become further embedded in society and more children suffer from their detrimental consequences. Public authorities must develop effective legislation and implement policies and programmes to prevent the over-sexualisation of children; parents and teachers must be equipped to convey coherent messages to children to combat this phenomenon; the media and advertising sectors should be encouraged to change their approaches to marketing and legal restrictions should be imposed if need be.
4. In the light of the above, the Parliamentary Assembly urges member States to:
 - 4.1. gather scientific evidence through longitudinal studies on the effects of the inappropriate over-sexualisation of children, and particularly girls, by collecting data, in order to help define appropriate legislative and political measures, and by carrying out a review of the existing international literature on the over-sexualisation of children, in order to better understand the gravity of the phenomenon and the current state of knowledge in the scientific community;
 - 4.2. take legislative action to put limits on the inappropriate sexualised depiction of children in the media and advertising sectors, based amongst others on the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CETS No. 201, “Lanzarote Convention”) and the guidelines contained in Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 on gender equality and media, whilst respecting the fundamental right to freedom of expression

Amendment 4

Tabled by Baroness Doreen E. MASSEY, Ms Petra De SUTTER, Ms Tineke STRIK, Ms Annette GROTH, Ms Marianne MIKKO, Ms Eka BESELIA, Mr Stefan SCHENNACH, Ms Valentina BULIGA, Ms Maryvonne BLONDIN

In the draft resolution, paragraph 1, in the first sentence, delete the following words: “, particularly girls,”

Amendment 1

Tabled by Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER, Mr Stefan SCHENNACH, Sir Alan MEALE, Ms Silvia Eloisa BONET, Ms Renata DESKOSKA, Mr Philippe MAHOUX, Ms Josette DURRIEU, Ms Maryvonne BLONDIN

In the draft resolution, paragraph 3, after the words “their approaches to marketing”, insert the following words: “and to refrain from continually promoting gender stereotypes,”

as guaranteed by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5);

- 4.3. adopt policies and measures that seek to inform, educate and remind parents about the dangers that their children face in an over-sexualised environment (as well as to raise awareness of indicators of related distress or trauma), and equip parents to educate their children on these very sensitive issues in a constructive way;
- 4.4. adopt policies which develop tools and information that provide guidance and support to schools and educational staff in protecting children from unwanted sexual attention and informing children about the realities of everyday pressure that they will face in schools, supporting the education that children receive from parents at home;

Amendment 2

Tabled by Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER, Mr Stefan SCHENNACH, Ms Silvia Eloisa BONET, Sir Alan MEALE, Ms Renata DESKOSKA, Mr Philippe MAHOUX, Ms Maryvonne BLONDIN, Ms Josette DURRIEU

In the draft resolution, replace paragraph 4.4 with the following paragraph:

"adopt policies which develop sex and relationship education programmes in a school context, and provide support for educational staff responsible for giving such education, with the aim of informing children about the realities of the everyday pressure they face in the media, at school and in other social contexts, and of protecting them against any unwanted sexual attention."

- 4.5. provide specific training to professionals who are engaged in educating and caring for children; enabling them to convey constructive messages to children and open up trustful dialogue with them;
- 4.6. set up effective media and advertising supervisory bodies to ensure the safeguarding of human dignity, and in particular the rights of children (where such bodies are not already in existence), and ensure that accessible and effective complaints mechanisms are in place;

Amendment 3

Tabled by Mr Ögmundur JÓNASSON, Mr Stefan SCHENNACH, Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER, Mr Andrej HUNKO, Mr Tiny KOX, Mr Tuur ELZINGA

In the draft resolution, replace paragraph 4.6 with the following paragraph:

"encourage media and advertising supervisory bodies to ensure the safeguarding of human dignity, and in particular the rights of children; where such advisory bodies are not already in existence, encourage them to be set up; and ensure that accessible and effective complaints mechanisms are in place;"

- 4.7. encourage the media and advertising sectors to safeguard the dignity and innocence of children in their productions, through self-regulatory mechanisms, internal codes of conduct and other voluntary action, and educate these sectors on the impact of overtly sexual content on children;
- 4.8. promote and support public policies, agencies, strategies and tools aimed at raising children's and young people's awareness of inappropriate over-sexualisation and empowering them to resist such trends by supporting approaches and structures (such as Safer Internet

Centres and helplines) and involve children in the conception and design of tools and messages;

- 4.9. support the education children receive from their parents at home by promoting programmes for children that highlight the dangers of an over-sexualised society and that:
 - 4.9.1. are provided at home and in schools (primary and secondary), but also via social networks, in an age-appropriate manner;
 - 4.9.2. include information about respect for one's own privacy and respect for others;
 - 4.9.3. empower children to develop critical attitudes towards media contents, and increase children's resilience to peer pressure, thus reducing the harmful consequences of sexualised images;

B. Draft Recommendation

1. Referring to its Resolution ... (2016) on fighting the over-sexualisation of children, the Parliamentary Assembly calls on the Committee of Ministers to ensure that the issue is addressed within the programme "Building a Europe for and with Children" and in particular the new Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021), as well as in the work programmes of other relevant Council of Europe bodies.
2. More specifically, the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to:
 - 2.1. transmit the said resolution to the governments of member States;
 - 2.2. invite the new Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child (CAHENF) to take into account the recommendations presented in the said Resolution ... (2016), and to develop a specific activity aimed at fighting the over-sexualisation of children, as well as to support targeted activities carried out by other bodies of the Council of Europe in a transversal manner;
 - 2.3. as regards the activities of other Council of Europe bodies:
 - 2.3.1. ask the Gender Equality Commission (GEC) to develop new standards specifically aimed at fighting the over-sexualisation of children;
 - 2.3.2. ask the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) to put a stronger emphasis on the protection of children, in the context of its activities on human rights for Internet users.