New Recommendation on Self-regulation Concerning Cyber Content

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On 5 September 2001, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a Recommendation concerning self-regulation and user protection against illegal or harmful content on new communications and information services. The Recommendation underlines the importance of Europe-wide and, indeed, international collaboration concerning the regulation of content on the Internet.

Recommendation Rec(2001)8 stresses the importance of self-regulatory initiatives by the information industries, in cooperation with the governments of member states. It presents certain principles and mechanisms dealing with illegal or harmful content on the Internet, which could be adapted by those parties.

The Recommendation encourages member states to promote the establishment of organisations representing Internet actors, which should participate in relevant legislative processes. Such participation could be achieved through, inter alia, consultations, hearings and expert opinions, and in the implementation of relevant norms. In cooperation with these organisations, member states should provide for the neutral labelling of, for example, pornographic and violent content, enabling users to exercise their own judgment in this connection.

Besides this definition of a set of content descriptors, search tools and filtering profiles should be developed, which could be applied by users on a voluntary basis. The use of conditional access tools to protect minors from harmful content should be promoted. Examples of these access tools include age-verification systems, personal identification codes, passwords, encryption and decoding systems.

Internet users should have access to content complaint systems such as hotlines, provided by both private institutions and public authorities. To deal with complaints about certain content, out-of-court mediation and arbitration should be established.

Member states are also urged to encourage public awareness and information about all these different measures.

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Recommendation Rec(2001)8 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on selfregulation concerning cyber content (self-regulation and user protection against illegal or harmful content on new communications and information services), adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 5 September 2001 at the 762nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies

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