Amsterdam Recommendations on Freedom of Media and Internet

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The Amsterdam Recommendations on Freedom of the Media and the Internet were launched by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media at a conference in the city on 14 June 2003.

The Recommendations stress the importance of eliminating "[b]arriers at all levels, be they technical, structural or educational", to digital networks and the Internet. Likewise, the importance of access to the public domain for "technical and cultural innovation" is also stressed, and it is added that the adoption of new provisions relating to copyright and patent law should not jeopardise this access.

The Recommendations insist that any type of censorship that is unacceptable vis-à-vis the "classic media", must not be applied to online media, nor should any new types of censorship be developed. All [imposed] mechanisms for filtering or blocking content are similarly frowned upon. Prosecutions relating to illegal content available online should target only that illegal content, and not the infrastructure of the Internet itself, according to the Recommendations. While existing laws regarding criminal content must also be observed online, the principle of freedom of expression "must not be confined".

Educational initiatives aimed at improving computer and Internet literacy (in schools, adult education schemes and specialised training for journalists) are encouraged.

The final section of the Recommendations, entitled "Professional Journalism", takes cognisance of the changing nature of journalism in "the digital era" and seeks to draw attention to the need for relevant regulatory authorities to be aware of the many usages of the Internet. It points out that the right to privacy of communication between individuals, traditional journalistic responsibilities and values, and the need for protection of new types of media (as well as "classic media") remain.

Amsterdam Recommendations on Freedom of the Media and the Internet, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, The Representative on Freedom of the Media, 14 June 2003

http://www.osce.org/documents/rfm/2003/06/215_en.pdf

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