European Commission: Amended Proposal for a Recommendation on Protection of Minors and Human Dignity and the Right of Reply

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On 23 January 2006, the European Commission submitted to Parliament its amended proposal of the Recommendation on the protection of minors and human dignity in the European audiovisual and online information services industry (see IRIS 2004-6: 5 and IRIS 2005-9: 3). The recommendation had been scrutinized by the European Parliament in September of 2005 and emerged with a number of amendments designed to contribute to the effective protection of minors and human dignity in relation to audiovisual and information services made available to the public “whatever the means of conveyance”. Whereas the scope of the Television without Frontiers Directive limited itself to the protection of minors and human dignity in television broadcasting activities, this new Recommendation seeks to cover the most recent technological developments and in particular on-line information services.

The core provisions of this Recommendation revolve around media literacy as a means to effectively educate the public at large on the dangers posed by the internet and the right of reply (or equivalent remedies) which should be implemented in each EU Member State by introducing appropriate measures in national law or practice. The Commission has accepted many Parliamentary amendments either entirely or in part so that the underlying principles remain intact. Specific internet training in schools targeting teachers as well as children and national EU-wide campaigns aimed at citizens are cited as examples to foster media literacy. The benefit of an exchange of best practices concerning such issues as a system of common descriptive symbols indicating the age category is reiterated and the role of the industry is yet again illustrated by its suggested use of filtering systems, access services meant specifically for children but also warning banners on all search engines.

As regards the protection of minors, the Commission intends to explore the possibility of supporting the establishment of a generic second level domain name reserved for monitored sites aimed at minors (this may well be .KID.eu) as proposed by Parliament.

Amended proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of minors and human dignity and

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the right of reply in relation to the competitiveness of the European audiovisual and information services industry of 20 January 2006

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