[TM] New act to regulate the Internet

IRIS 2015-2:1/32

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On 20 December 2014, the President of the Turkmenistan signed into law the statute “On the legal regulation of the development of the Internet and Internet services in Turkmenistan”. It consists of 8 chapters and 34 articles.

The main objectives of the statute are to provide unrestricted Internet access to users throughout the territory of Turkmenistan, to define the legal regime of the information posted or disseminated online, to prevent socially dangerous acts committed on the Internet, as well as to create the conditions necessary to maximise the detection and subsequent punishment of those who commit such offenses.

As stated in the statute (Article 3), one of the basic principles of the regulation of the relations connected to the development of the Internet in Turkmenistan is to ensure the freedoms and rights of the citizens of the Republic, as well as access to the information placed on the network. In its definitions and basic principles the new statute follows the Model Statute “On the Basics of Internet Regulation”, adopted by the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly in 2011 (IRIS 2011-8/10).

The statute requires that the computer networks of all governmental executive structures be connected to the Internet. Access to the Internet is also obligatory for all scholarly, educational and cultural institutions, including schools, museums and archives (Article 17). It stipulates that governmental offices establish official websites with a certain set of information, as well as assign officials to make sure that the information on these websites is truthful and updated. Upon request, information on the activity of these offices shall be provided via email too (Article 13).

The provisions of Article 18 stipulate that print media may have online versions that should closely follow the structure and content of the original edition and do not need a separate registration. Online media outlets autonomous of print publications are required to go through state registration in accordance with the statute “On the mass media” (IRIS 2013-3/29).

The law establishes special restrictions on children’s access to information products, which are transmitted through the Internet. The information that is prohibited for children includes materials that can make them want to consume alcohol, drugs or tobacco. Also there are materials that deny family values and

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constitute disrespect to parents, justify illegal behaviour, and contain foul language. For this reason, the statute permits ISPs to verify the age of every user before providing a service and obliges all institutions where children may have access to Internet to apply special filters (Article 28). It also bans distribution among children of certain types of computer games (Article 29).

The Statute establishes liability for users who send information containing state and other protected secrets over the Internet. This applies to the online publishing of those materials, which contain slander or insult of the head of state, pornography, propaganda of violence and cruelty, propaganda for war, national, racial and religious hatred, as well as appeals aimed at a violent change of the constitutional order (Article 30). This article, in particular, bans bypassing ISPs when exchanging online information; intentional commercial emails to be sent by the same user often than once a month; and dissemination or publication of intellectual property works without a relevant permission, as established by the law of Turkmenistan.

Public associations are encouraged by the Statute to report illegal information to an as yet unnamed governmental agency to be tasked with the control on the practical enactment of the statute, the latter being obliged to take into account such reports (Article 26).

ISPs are to store data on the users and the services provided to them for at least 12 months and submit it upon request to judicial and law-enforcement bodies (Article 25).

The Statute entered into force on 29 December 2014.

Private access to the Internet in Turkmenistan became possible in 2007.

ЗАКОН ТУРКМЕНИСТАНА "О правовом регулировании развития сети Интернет и оказания интернет-услуг в Туркменистане"

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Statute of Turkmenistan, "On the legal regulation of the development of the Internet and Internet services in Turkmenistan" of 20 December 2014

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