Committee of Ministers: Recommendation on Big Data for culture, literacy and democracy

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On 29 September 2017, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a Recommendation on Big Data for culture, literacy and democracy. The Recommendation provides comprehensive guidelines on how to address the implications of citizens' participation in and access to digital culture. In its Recommendation, the Committee of Ministers encourages member States to engage in identifying challenges and opportunities related to "Big Data" in the digital cultural field, with "Big Data" being defined as the growing technological ability to collect, process and extract new and predictive knowledge from a great volume, velocity and variety of data. The Recommendation stresses the importance of fostering critical digital media and information literacy among citizens. This is to ensure that all individuals are made aware of the processing of cultural Big Data and can thus make informed choices and decisions regarding algorithmic decision-making, which is used to predict cultural attributes, preferences and behaviour.

The Recommendation is composed of three parts: a preambular section, a detailed set of guidelines addressed to States on how to effectively implement the digital policy standards for all entities processing cultural Big Data, and lastly, a glossary providing a comprehensive list of terms and definitions for the purposes of the Recommendation. The guidelines are further divided into three categories: (i) Processing Cultural Big Data, (ii) Critical Digital Media and Information Literacy, and (iii) Multi-stakeholder Dialogue and Action. This three-fold division helps to better conceptualise different aspects of Big Data processing but also supports the digitisation of the existing culture throughout Europe. The Recommendation underlines the fact that a human rights approach is required for all policies on culture, including those which address the digital shift. Subsequently the document intends to increase awareness about cultural and personal big data processing in all layers of the society.

Firstly, the Committee of Ministers recommends that governments of member States support critical digital media and information literacy programmes. This would enable Internet users to better understand and manage algorithmic decision-making applied to cultural Big Data. Such policy would also support the development of a multi-stakeholder policy exchange on the future of culture, having regard to Big Data, critical digital media and information literacy and

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democracy.

Secondly, the Recommendation encourages member States to implement a number of measures (including a review of the national policy of public cultural institutions) and draw up strategies, policies and practices on cultural Big Data, in particular with regard to the opportunities for and threats to cultural diversity and access to culture. Moreover, member States should ensure that public-service good-governance assessment criteria are applied to the automated dissemination of news by media channels, notably with regard to transparency, openness, responsiveness and responsibility. Further, member States should foster and support digital initiatives in the cultural sector, in conjunction with educational initiatives (including critical digital media and information literacy programmes), to fight online radicalisation and counter “fake news”, as they are increasingly data-driven.

Finally, the Recommendation urges the private sector to respect the human rights of Internet users, especially with regard to algorithmic decision-making applied to cultural Big Data, and to cooperate with member States in their reviews of policies and practices related to the processing of cultural Big Data - particularly with regard to the opportunities for and threats to cultural diversity and access to culture.

Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)8 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on Big Data for culture, literacy and democracy, 27 September 2017

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