Standing Committee on Transfrontier Television: The Use of Virtual Images on television

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For the first time since its existence, the Standing Committee of the European Convention on Transfrontier Television has adopted two Recommendations in order to facilitate and improve the application of the Convention. The first Recommendation, adopted during the 11th meeting of the Committee on 5 - 6 December 1996, concerns the use of virtual images in news and current affairs programmes. The latter, adopted during the Committee's 12th meeting on 20 - 21 March 1997, relates to the use of virtual advertising notably during the broadcast of sports events.

Most important, the Recommendations are clear on the fact that virtual advertising is not considered to be outside the scope of the Convention, which does not, however, mean that virtual techniques in advertising are not allowed. Both Recommendations stipulate that the use of virtual images falls under the editorial responsibility of the broadcasters. With regard to Article 7 (3) of the Convention, which regulates the obligation for broadcasters to ensure that "news fairly presents facts and events", the Committee defines additional principles applicable to the use of virtual images: First, the prohibition to manipulate or distort the content of an information, second, the obligation to inform the viewer when virtual images are being used.

As regards the first Recommendation, the Committee states that the use of virtual images "must be necessary or helpful to illustrate information or a hypothetical version of the event being discussed". In its second Recommendation, the Committee stresses the appropriateness of self-regulation in the field of virtual advertising and welcomes a code of conduct adopted by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and the Association of Commercial Television in Europe (ACT), which, in its main points, corresponds to the principles set out by the Committee.

Although its second Recommendation permits the conclusion that the rules of television advertising should sometimes be applicable to virtual advertising, the Committee did not take a general decision on the applicability of these rules with respect to virtual advertising as opposed to the rules of venue advertising.

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Recommendation (96) 1 concerning the use of virtual images in news and current affairs programmes adopted by the Standing Committee on Transfrontier Television at its 11th meeting on 5-6 December 1997

Recommendation (97) 1 concerning the use of virtual advertising notably during the broadcast of sports events adopted by the Standing Committee on Transfrontier Television at its 12th meeting on 20-21 March 1997

Virtual advertising: code of conduct between the EBU and ACT

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