Committee of Ministers: Reply to the Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation on “Ending cyberdiscrimination and online hate”

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Bojana Kostić
Institute for Information Law (IViR), University of Amsterdam

On 17 October 2017, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe issued a reply to the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) Recommendation 2098 (2017) on “Ending cyberdiscrimination and online hate” (see IRIS 2017-3/4). In its reply, the Committee of Ministers mainly referred to the PACE requests concerning the reviewing and updating of several policy instruments concerning hate speech, intermediaries and the media.

With regard to the PACE’s request for the Committee of Ministers to review Recommendation 97(20) on hate speech (see 1997-10/4), the Committee reiterates that the definition of hate speech is sufficiently broad to cover any hate speech that is based on intolerance, covering all forms of dissemination through any kind of media. Given its broad scope, the principles set out in Recommendation 97(20) apply to the online and offline environment. Therefore, the Committee of Ministers points out that this Recommendation remains a valuable instrument enabling member states to continue to combat hate speech. However, it is recognised that there is a need to explore new ways of helping member states to eliminate barriers to its implementation.

The PACE 2017 Recommendation also suggested that the Committee of Ministers should evaluate its Internet Governance Strategy for 2016-2019. In its reply, the Committee of Ministers stated that the Strategy already envisages measures aligned with the PACE Recommendation on “Ending cyberdiscrimination and online hate.” Through its action such as the No Hate Speech Campaign Movement and Hate Speech Watch - as well as through the Platform to promote protection of journalism and safety of journalists (see IRIS 2017-2/2) - the Internet Governance Strategy is fulfilling the objectives set out in the PACE Recommendation. In addition, a new Recommendation on Internet intermediaries is currently being drafted and should be submitted to the Committee of Ministers by the end of the year.

Finally, concerning the PACE request to launch education work against racism and hate speech targeting children, the Committee of Ministers notes numerous engagements of the Council of Europe in “human rights education for young people”, including a new project initiative “Digital Citizenship Education.” The importance of the Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP)

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programme was emphasised as well as that of the Committee of Ministers' proposal concerning the designation of a European Day for Victims of Hate Crime.

Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Reply to "Ending cyberdiscrimination and online hate - Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2098 (2017), Doc. CMAS(2017)Rec2098 final, 17 October 2017

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