Committee of Ministers: Adoption of Two Resolutions on the New Technologies

IRIS 1998-1:1/3

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The 5th European Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy held in Thessaloniki on 11 and 12 December last year, attended by the Ministers from Council of Europe member States which are responsible for national media policies, adopted two resolutions concerning the field of the new technologies. The first Resolution covers "the impact of new communications technologies on human rights and democratic values". It introduces the principle of "universal community service", according to which the States undertake to create a framework for access by the public to networks and new communications services on a universal basis, that is regardless of place of residence, at an affordable price, comprising a basic service (especially in the field of information, education and culture) to which all individuals should have access. Fair and non-discriminatory access should also be ensured by all providers and operators involved in these new networks and services. The Ministers reiterated their attachment to the freedom of expression and information and the exercise of journalistic freedoms and cultural pluralism which, while remaining closely protected, should find greater significance in the development of the new technologies. Lastly, the States undertake to guarantee the respect for human rights and democratic values as set out in the various texts of the Council of Europe, while combating the use of the new communications and information services for spreading any ideology, or carrying out any activity, which is contrary to such rights, by preventing the creation, processing or manipulation of images and sounds compromising the fair presentation of facts and events in news reporting, ensuring that the use of the new technologies does not prejudice the right to a fair trial nor the authority and impartiality of the judiciary, while guaranteeing the right to privacy of correspondence and the transmission of personal data, etc.

The second Resolution adopted by the Ministers at Thessaloniki covers the need to rethink overall the regulatory framework for the media with a view to adapting it to the current development of the new technologies, referring in this respect to the three Recommendations adopted on 30 September 1997 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (see IRIS 1997-10: 4).

Lastly, the Ministers (except the russian representative) adopted a Statement on freedom of expression and the Media in the Republic of Belarus.

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Council of Europe, 5th European Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy 11 - 12 December 1997. Resolution No.2: Rethinking the Regulatory Framework for the Medias

Council of Europe, 5th European Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy, 11 - 12 December 1997. Statement on Freedom of Expression and the Media in the Republic of Belarus

Council of Europe, 5th European Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy, 11 - 12 December 1997. Resolution No.1: The Impact of New Communications Technologies on Human Rights and Democratic Values

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