

Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI)



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FRENCH PROPOSED STUDY OF CONNECTED TELEVISION BY THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE STEERING COMMITTEE ON MEDIA AND INFORMATION SOCIETY

I. – Background

In respect of the CDMSI's 2012-2013 work programme and the preparation of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Media and Information Society (Belgrade, 2013), delegations were asked to submit proposals to the CDMSI Secretariat for discussion topics relating to the following questions: can the new communication environment ensure ongoing reliability? What issues are raised by this new environment, particularly as regards freedom of expression, privacy, the right of association, and diversity and pluralism in the media ecosystem?

In this context, France would like to contribute to the work of the CDMSI by suggesting a study on the theme of connected television, which is the expression of a new phenomenon of convergence between traditional television and the new non-linear audiovisual services available on the internet. This raises many issues in terms of regulation.

Bearing in mind the heavy workload already assigned to the committee under its terms of reference for the next two years, France would like to discuss the possibility of achieving operational results (guidelines etc) on this subject as part of the work on new media, and proposes that, at the very least, this subject be one of the themes of the ministerial conference

II. – Reasons for a study of connected television in the Council of Europe context

For television viewers, the increased commercial availability of Internet-connectable television sets creates a new bridge between the traditional world of audiovisual broadcasting and the more recent world of internet connectivity (a process which is already well under way in many Council of Europe member countries with the success of television via ADSL – IPTV). Although it is difficult to gauge the magnitude of this new phenomenon, given that it will depend on developments in viewers' habits, "connected

television” is likely to bring about a change in consumption patterns for audiovisual content and in the structure of the audiovisual and electronic communication sector.

Hence, as with any major change brought about through technological innovation, the advent of Internet-connected television sets presents opportunities but also raises concerns in Europe.

In this connection, there are three defining issues:

- firstly, the choice of different technologies by manufacturers and the possible existence of exclusivity agreements could lead to vertical fragmentation of the supply of content and services, which would be detrimental to consumers, content producers and service developers;
- secondly, the possibility of accessing different types of media services from the main television reception terminal could have a significant impact on value distribution between players from diverse backgrounds (with, in particular, a risk of value capture by powerful non-community players), the financing of audiovisual creation and film-making, and cultural diversity;
- and lastly, the development of connected television raises certain issues in terms of regulation, particularly as regards the protection of younger viewers and human dignity and respect for pluralism and intellectual property.

Given the issues at stake in the debate on the future of audiovisual creation and cultural diversity, as well as for the economic survival of European audiovisual players, reflection at Council of Europe level on the question of connected television seems both appropriate and desirable.

The natural forum for debate is the CDMSI, which in the past has always shown the ability to adopt a dynamic approach to changes in the European framework in the face of developments in new audiovisual services, notably by proposing a new definition of the concept of media.

In order to anticipate these changes, identify the regulatory issues related to the development of connected television and forestall its effects on the balance of audiovisual production and broadcasting, on cultural diversity and therefore on freedom of expression, the CDMSI could engage with this subject..