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## **“Regional conference for media regulatory bodies: European standards and best practices on hate speech and protection of minors”**

7-8 July 2016, Petrovac, Montenegro

### **Conclusions**

Within the Council of Europe and the European Union project “Strengthening the judicial expertise on freedom of expression and the media in South East Europe”, a regional conference was organised, entitled “European standards and best practices in relation to hate speech and the protection of minors”, which was held on 7-8 July 2016, in Petrovac, Montenegro.

The aim of the activity was to talk about these, for all regulatory bodies, important topics - the relevant European standards and existing practices in the region. The goal of the conference was the promotion of regional cooperation in the fight against hate speech and the protection of minors from potentially inappropriate and harmful media content. Since this conference was the first gathering organised in the framework of the new project of the Council of Europe – there were discussion about future cooperation and potential activities related to the field of media regulation.

The meeting was attended by representatives of regulatory bodies from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Kosovo\*<sup>1</sup>. Participants of the meeting, together with experts from Slovenia and Croatia, exchanged experiences related to regulation in this area, and in the end the conference reached the following conclusions:

- **Regional cooperation and possible topics for the next Conference**
  - **Continued cooperation.** It is necessary to continue to organise regional conferences to facilitate the exchange of experiences and a forum for discussion on topics of common interest to all regulatory bodies in the region. Experience has shown that this type of cooperation in many cases resulted in finding the best answers to some of the challenges

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<sup>1</sup> Any reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in the Project documentation should be interpreted in accordance with the Resolution 1244 of the UN Security Council and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

that regulators were faced with. As it was before, the conference topics should be determined in accordance with the needs described in the sections which follow.

- **Protection of minors.** It was proposed to prepare a document on regional cooperation which would be related to the territorial jurisdiction primarily addressing complaints relating to the topic of protection of minors in broadcasted content.
  - **New trends.** It is necessary to improve cooperation when it comes to new trends e.g. with regard to the revision of the Directive, the recommendation is to establish cooperation on the development of guidelines for codes of video sharing platform because it is a transnational challenge. In that way, from the very beginning, joint measures and activities will be taken, and the need for subsequent harmonisation of practices in the region will be avoided. The proposal is to discuss this issue at one of the following regional events and to define the activities that could be implemented at the national level for each of the countries.
  - **Co-regulation.** One of the topics of the next regional conference could be a matter of regulation and self-regulation, the promotion of co-regulation - with the presentation of European examples of good practice.
  - **Media Literacy.** The organisation of a regional event to deal with this issue was proposed. Exchange of experiences at regional level was again recognised as a crucial factor, as well as need to invite all the other relevant stakeholders to this conference - representatives of parliaments and ministries i.e. all those who make decisions on media policies.
  - **Cooperation of regulators and representatives of public services.** The participants agreed that it would be useful to organise a regional meeting that would bring together the representatives of regulatory bodies and public services in order to discuss their own productions, media pluralism and access to high-quality media content.
  - **Publication on hate speech.** It was proposed to prepare an annual publication on hate speech that would contain detailed information about all cases that were dealt with by the regulators in the region (where the case would be presented from beginning to end - why it began, how and in what context it was created, which decision was made and how it was applied). Also, one part of the publication could be devoted to the examples of the European Court of Human Rights. These examples could serve as guidelines and recommendations for further action in similar cases.
- **Education on media literacy**
    - The participants agreed that it was necessary to promote media literacy in all the countries participating in the project, through the organisation of round tables and trainings, in which the representatives of regulators and other institutions and organisations would participate.
    - In addition, the education of young people is recognised as a good way of raising awareness and knowledge on the media, the rights and responsibilities in the media sphere, hate speech, protection of minors and other standards. In this regard, the recommendation of the regulators is to organise guest lectures at universities in the region, as well as that the Council of Europe should explore the possibility of organising a regional academy, bringing together students of journalism and law from all the countries where the project is implemented.

- **Other**

- It was proposed to organise inter-professional training for media professionals and representatives of the judiciary on reporting on judicial proceedings.
- In July 2015, for easier and faster communication, the representatives of regulatory bodies from the region determined the focal points for the exchange of comments, questions and suggestions of possible solutions in cases where it is necessary to react and protect the rights of minors. It was agreed to add contact persons from regulatory bodies of Albania and Kosovo \* to this list.

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### “Regional conference for media regulatory bodies: European standards and best practices on hate speech and protection of minors”

7-8 July 2016, Petrovac, Montenegro

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