

Press Release

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Reykjavik conference maps out future Council of Europe work on media and the Internet

Reykjavik, 29.05.2009 - Ministers and representatives from the 47 Council of Europe member states today adopted an Action Plan that outlines the direction of the organisation's future work on media and the Internet.

In a political declaration adopted at the 1st Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Media and New Communication Services on 28-29 May, they stated that the Council of Europe should explore the notion of media and, if necessary, review the concept itself, establishing criteria for distinguishing media or media-like services from new forms of personal communication.

The ministers asked the Organisation to assess in consultation with relevant stakeholders whether the existing freedom of expression and information standards for traditional media should apply to new media and service providers, or if new ones should be elaborated. As for traditional media, they supported self-regulation as the basic way for ensuring compliance with freedom of expression standards. They also highlighted that new service providers - such as ISPs, content aggregators or search engines - should be made aware of their rights and their duties and responsibilities.

In the conference, the ministers also adopted resolutions on the new notion of media, critical Internet resources, and the protection of freedom of expression and information with regard to anti-terrorist laws.

The ministers resolved to review national anti-terrorist laws and practice on a regular basis to ensure that any impact on freedom of expression and information is consistent with the Council of Europe standards, in particular the case law of the European Court of Human Rights ¹.

They stated that although in some cases it is inappropriate to disseminate particular information in order to prevent terrorist acts in the interest of an ongoing investigation, the protection of the victims or judicial proceedings, "reporting on terrorism cannot be equated to supporting terrorism". They also underlined that concerns have been raised that, in some cases, anti-terrorist laws restricting freedom of expression and information in member states are "too broad, fail to define clear limits to authorities' interference or lack sufficient procedural guarantees to prevent abuse".

With regard to the Internet, they called on all states and non-state actors to explore ways to ensure that critical Internet resources are managed in the public interest and as a public asset, even by elaborating an international legal instrument. They also asked the Council of Europe to explore the feasibility of elaborating a treaty to further protect cross-border Internet traffic. Finally, they called on the Council of Europe to make more lasting arrangements for organising Pan-European Internet governance events.

Organised under the theme "A new notion of media?" the conference was organised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Iceland and the Council of Europe.

(1) The Russian Federation supported all the adopted texts with the exception of this undertaking.

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A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 47 member states.

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[Political Declaration and resolutions](#)

Practical information:

- The sessions of the ministerial conference are available in video **webcast** on www.ministerialconference.is
- For further information, please contact Jaime Rodriguez (Tel. +33 3 89 99 50 42; jaime.rodriquez@coe.int)