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**Recommendation Rec(2006)12  
of the Committee of Ministers to member states  
on empowering children in the new information and communications environment**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 September 2006*

*at the 974th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Reaffirming the commitment of member states to the fundamental right to freedom of expression and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authorities and regardless of frontiers, as guaranteed by Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (the European Convention on Human Rights, ETS No. 5);

Underlining, in this connection, that the development of information and communication technologies and services should contribute to everyone's enjoyment of the rights guaranteed by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, for the benefit of each individual and the democratic culture of every society;

Recalling the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on freedom of communication on the Internet of 2003 which stresses that such freedom should not prejudice the dignity or fundamental rights and freedoms of others, especially children;

Aware that communication using new information and communication technologies and services must respect the right to privacy and to secrecy of correspondence, as guaranteed by Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights and as elaborated by Recommendation No. R (99) 5 on the protection of privacy on the Internet;

Mindful of the potential impact, both positive and negative, that information and communication technologies and services can have on the enjoyment of fundamental rights in the information society and the particular role and responsibility of member states in securing the protection of those rights;

Bearing in mind the various types of illegal content and behaviour referred to in the Convention on Cybercrime (ETS No. 185) and its Additional Protocol concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems (ETS No. 189);

Conscious of the risk of harm from content and behaviour in the new information and communications environment which may not always be illegal but which are capable of adversely affecting the physical, emotional and psychological well-being of children, such as online pornography, the portrayal and glorification of violence and self-harm, demeaning, discriminatory or racist expressions or apologia for such conduct, solicitation (grooming), bullying, stalking and other forms of harassment;

Recalling, in this respect, Recommendation No. R (97) 19 on the portrayal of violence in the electronic media and Recommendation Rec(2001)8 on self-regulation concerning cyber-content;

Convinced that an essential part of the response to content and behaviour carrying a risk of harm lies in the development and provision of information literacy, defined as the competent use of tools providing access to information, the development of critical analysis of content and the appropriation of communication skills to foster citizenship and creativity, and training initiatives for children and their educators in order for them to use information and communication technologies and services in a positive and responsible manner;

Underlining the need for empowerment with regard to information and communication services and technologies, as referred to in the 1999 Declaration on a European policy for new information technologies, and the importance of developing competence in this field, in particular through training at all levels of the education system, formal and informal, and throughout life;

Encouraging, in this connection, active, critical and discerning use of these services and technologies, the promotion of better and wider use of the new information technologies in teaching and learning, and the use of information networks in the education field;

Recalling the importance of education for democratic citizenship which provides children and their educators with the necessary capabilities (knowledge, skills, understanding, attitudes, human rights values and behaviour) they need to live, actively participate and act responsibly with respect to the rights of others, as referred to in Recommendation Rec(2002)12 on education for democratic citizenship;

Recalling the adopted texts of the 7th European Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy held in Kyiv in 2005, in particular Resolution No. 3 and the Action Plan, regarding the need to support steps to promote, at all stages of education and as part of ongoing learning, media literacy which involves active and critical use of all media as well as the promotion by member states of the adoption of an adequate level of protection for children against harmful content;

Recalling also the pledge in the Action Plan, adopted at the Third Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe held in Warsaw in 2005, to pursue work on children in the information society, in particular as regards media literacy skills and protection against harmful content;

Noting the important role of private sector and civil society actors in promoting the enjoyment of fundamental rights, such as freedom of expression and respect for human dignity in the information society, as highlighted in the 2005 Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on human rights and the rule of law in the Information Society,

Recommends that member states develop, where necessary, a coherent information literacy and training strategy which is conducive to empowering children and their educators in order for them to make the best possible use of information and communication services and technologies, having regard to the following:

- i. member states should ensure that children are familiarised with, and skilled in, the new information and communications environment and that, to this end, information literacy and training for children become an integral part of school education from an early stage in their lives;
- ii. member states should ensure that children acquire the necessary skills to create, produce and distribute content and communications in the new information and communications environment in a manner which is both respectful of the fundamental rights and freedoms of others and conducive to the exercise and enjoyment of their own fundamental rights, in particular the right to freedom of expression and information balanced with the right to private life;
- iii. member states should ensure that such skills enable children to better understand and deal with content (for example violence and self-harm, pornography, discrimination and racism) and behaviours (such as grooming, bullying, harassment or stalking) carrying a risk of harm, thereby promoting a greater sense of confidence, well-being and respect for others in the new information and communications environment;
- iv. in this connection, member states should encourage and facilitate:
  - the development of pedagogical material and learning tools for the use of educators to enable them to recognise and react responsibly to content and behaviour carrying a risk of harm;
  - strategies to raise awareness, inform and train educators so that they may effectively empower children in their care, in particular to prevent and limit their exposure to content and behaviour carrying a risk of harm;
  - programmes of research which examine the motivations and conduct of children at different developmental stages, with the assistance of public and private sector actors who handle content and communications regarding children's use of information and communication services and technologies.

Member states should have regard to the desirability of pursuing a multi-stakeholder approach to empowering children in the new information and communications environment, as follows:

- i. in partnership with governments, the private sector, as one of the key actors in the information society, should be encouraged to promote and facilitate children's skills, well-being and related information literacy and training initiatives. In this connection, actors in this sector should regularly assess and evaluate their information policies and practices regarding child safety and responsible use, while respecting fundamental rights, in particular the right to freedom of expression and to receive and impart information and opinions without interference and regardless of frontiers;
- ii. in partnership with governments and the private sector, civil society actors, as key catalysts in promoting the human rights dimension of the information society, should be encouraged to actively monitor, evaluate and promote children's skills, well-being and related information literacy and training initiatives;
- iii. the media should be encouraged to be attentive to their role as a vital source of information and reference for children and their educators in the new information and communications environment, with particular regard to fundamental rights.

## Related documents

### ▾ Meetings

**974th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies - Meetings 2006** / 27 September 2006 / *English* 

### ▾ Committee of Ministers; Council of Europe

**CM/Del/Dec(2006)974/5.1d** / 02 October 2006 / *English* / *CM-Public*

Steering Committee on the Media and New Communication Services (CDMC) - d. Draft Recommendation Rec(2006)... of the Committee of Ministers to member states on empowering children in the new information...