INTERNET CONTENT
FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

■ Few can argue against the benefits of the Internet and its potential as an instrument of social change. Yet, certain online services and readily available violent and sexist material can put individuals at risk.

■ The largest percentage of users of the Internet are young people. They are immersed in the process of forming their opinions and attitudes about norms and acceptable behaviour, and also about sexuality. Their attitudes toward women and men, their present and future conduct and roles are capable of being strongly influenced by Internet content.

■ The challenge is to protect all fundamental rights and ensure their full enjoyment in online environments and at the same time prevent the damaging effects of gender-related harmful content. This is indispensable for achieving de facto gender equality.

■ Considerable efforts are made to protect children from online content and related behaviour that involve a risk of harm. But what about online services and content that adversely affect women's well being? For example, the tracking of mobile phones is seen as a useful innovation; however, it is often used for stalking, with women the most frequent victims.

■ Gender sensitivity can help understand how Internet contents of a sexual and violent nature can lead to violent and discriminatory practices against women. By introducing a gender perspective when discussing Internet content and its regulation, policy-makers and the private sector can better understand how the Internet impacts women and men differently, whether it is positively or negatively.

Objectives

■ Promote the introduction of a gender perspective into the mainstream discussion on Internet content regulation.

■ Promote a gender perspective and equality between women and men in the electronic media.

■ Promote women's participation in Internet industry, in particular in decision-making.

■ Encourage the use of non-sexist language and images in the media, including the Internet.

■ Encourage states to promote training, education and awareness raising action to combat sexist stereotypes.

Achievements

■ Recommendation No. R (84)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on equality between women and men in the media.

■ Recommendation 2002(5) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of women against violence.

■ Recommendation CM/Rec (2007)13 on gender mainstreaming in education.

■ Recommendation 1555 (2002) by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the image of women in the media.

■ Recommendation 1799 (2007) by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the image of women in advertising.

■ Resolution 1751 (2010) and Recommendation 1931 (2010) by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on combating sexist stereotypes in the media.

■ Resolution and Action Plan adopted at the 7th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Equality between Women and Men on "Bridging the gap between de jure and de facto equality to achieve real gender equality" (Baku, 24-25 May 2010).

Next steps

■ The Council of Europe is currently working on a convention that will set legally-binding standards in the field of combating violence against women and domestic violence. This convention will also address the role which the information and communication technology sector and the media can play in reducing the availability of online services or material which can be harmful to women.

■ The Council of Europe is planning to prepare a handbook on strategies to combat gender stereotypes in the media.

■ The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is calling on regulatory authorities and self-regulatory bodies to define codes of good practice in order to combat sexist practices in the media. These authorities are also encouraged to monitor and strengthen their reporting mechanisms on stereotyped portrayals of women and men. The introduction of a European system of monitoring and exchange of best practices is also proposed.

www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/equality

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