

**1st Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Media and New
Communications Services**

A new notion of media?

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Sub-theme 1. New media – new regulations?

Address by Mrs Laine Jänes, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Estonia

Chairman

Dear Ministers

Ladies and Gentlemen

Internet has become an inevitable part of our every-day life. For example, 90 percent of Estonian people, who submitted their income tax statements this year, made it by the Internet. The access to the increasing variety of Information Society services in digital environment is becoming available for more and more people .

New media is a part of the society and all the rules and fundamental values, characteristic of democratic society, should apply also to new media services. The principles of freedom of expression and information, the dignity of human beings, protection of minors, media pluralism etc should be respected and promoted also in new media services.

It seems to me that first and foremost the new regulations ought to be flexible, taking into account the speciality of the service, whereas trying to avoid its excessive regulation. When planning a reform of audiovisual media regulation in Estonia, we feel the need to raise the importance of the mechanisms of self-regulation in it.

New challenges demand new approaches. Now I'd like to share with you some thoughts related to debates on media issues, taking place in Estonia nowadays.

We all see how quickly the popularity of *online* media has grown lately. But here are also economic aspects and a danger to become too dependent on the number of cliques being made by readers, while the quality and trustworthy content remain secondary. The quality media is replaced

more and more by tabloid one which „sells better“. It seems to be quite wide spread tendency in *online* media nowadays and we are concerned about it. We wish that intelligent people can find in *online* media also tomorrow a quality media content with good analyses and balanced approaches. We hope that the Internet media will not become mainly a stronghold of yellow content and lightweight entertainment.

Another issue related to *online* media is the anonymity of Internet comments and we see several problems here. We have reached a paradoxical situation where authors of the comments are fully enjoying the principle of freedom of expression. But at the same time some of them misuse this freedom, having no responsibility for their words. And sometimes these anonymous comments could be abusive and harmful for another person. How to protect this person's human dignity? How to find a right balance here? We see here a problematic phenomenon, which is working actually against the freedom of expression, as some people prefer not to participate in social debates anymore, being afraid to fall a victim to malicious comments.

Media in its new forms should broaden people's opportunities to participate in social debates, not to cast them off.

Bigger fragmentation of the audience caused by the new media forms brings along a problem how to retain coherence and common democratic values of the society. Continually important role here has a public-service media that has always been considered important in democratic society. Now in new digital environment its development on new platforms, offering new media-services, taking into account also the young audience, must be guaranteed and promoted.

These are some important for us issues which need a further discussion and I very much hope that the Council of Europe will keep these topics on its agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Hopefully a great work in revision of the European Convention on Transfrontier Television will come to an end very soon, forming a good basis for efficient, but flexible regulation of new media services together with the Audiovisual Media Services Directive of the European Union.

Estonia appreciates and supports the work of Council of Europe in retaining and respecting democratic values in the whole Europe and wider. We wish that these values should be followed also in rapidly changing media environment in a good co-operation of all European states.

I'd like to thank the Council of Europe and the Government of Iceland for arranging this conference. I believe that the fruitful discussions taking place here and the documents being adopted will be a good contribution to our orientation in the complicated new media environment. Our work here should facilitate the interpretation of new media from the point of view of values, important to the democratic world, fixing these values in new media itself.

Thank you for your attention.