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NEW DIMENSIONS OF MEDIA IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The first conference of European ministers responsible for media and new communication services – A new notion of media?

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Mister Chairman (Madame Chair), Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure and honor to address this conference on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Croatia as well as to express my sincere thanks to Iceland for warm welcome and excellent organization of this event.

Information communications technology has changed our lives fastest than any other technology in the past. Namely, by enabling networking of the word it has eased communication, erased borders between the states, differences between the people and enriched them with access to uncountable number of information.

The power of digital era has changed the world of media as well. It made them interactive; on demand; user controlled; digital and with electronic delivery. Last but not the least; it has raised the need of their responsibility towards the citizens of digital era.

In 1969 Marshall McLuhan stated that *“The effects of new media on our sensory lives are similar to the effects of new poetry. They change not our thoughts but the structure of our world”*. This notion place the media in the context of new technology in such a manner that the fundamentals of the media - the time (to deliver message in less time) and space (to deliver message in more space) are fully exploited. Thus, the role of media in current information technology environment is dramatically changing with more and more demand for true, non-discriminatory, non-vulnerable content. The target is no longer mass audience but individuals and community that seek the content tailored to their contextual, perceptual and behavioral stages. At the same time, with the new information technology the messages reach the audience the moment they are created,

leaving very short time to react or make decisions on information received through media. As the result, new media have changed the structure of the world.

However, both the media and the society need new ways to better deal with and understand the changes that are influencing all the individuals, groups and sectors of society. The media professionals take new dimensions of responsibility very close to the term of "technoethics", meaning that they must instrumentalise the information technology in a way which also comprises the professional and societal values. Most of these should be built by self-regulating mechanisms applying the new or redesigning the existing Deontological Codes and Codes of Ethics.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a crucial task for all member countries of the Council of Europe to accept the principle of universality of fundamental rights regardless of the technology, communication channels or bearing medium in question. Those fundamental rights are freedom of speech, freedom of information and criticism, freedom of the press and access to information.

The media should recognize and respect the diversity of opinions, oppose all discrimination based on sex, race, nationality, language, religion, ideology, culture, class or convictions, provided that the convictions thus professed are not in contradiction with the respect for fundamental human rights.

At the same time, the Internet and other new media environments must secure the journalists' right to obtain information, to publish, and to criticize while the new media stakeholders must keep in mind that protection of personal rights and privacy are the

principal categories of the society in the 21st century, reflecting and expressing basic democratic principles.

Today, the Republic of Croatia is in the process of adopting this scenario for the future synergistic action of the media and communications industries in order to fully accommodate to the expectations, needs and interests of every individual and group in a society regardless of technology used.

Having in mind that new media have created new demands on responsibility, responsiveness and accountability, it is our responsibility and mission to promote these values in order to encourage the further development of information society.

Thank you.