

The 7th ERGA plenary adopted the report on the Protection of Minors and discussed the upcoming activities for 2017

During its plenary meeting in Brussels on 9 March the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA) adopted its Report on the Protection of Minors. The report provides an overview of protection measures currently used by a wide range of players in the so-called 'converged audiovisual media landscape'. The report shows there is a high level of aspiration amongst market players to offer audiences a broad range of future proof protection tools as well as a need for a harmonised system of content descriptors.

The report contains a snapshot of protection measures currently employed by different players in the converged media environment. It describes traditional tools such as pin-codes and age-rating systems that have also become common in the online-environment, but also features allowing users to flag harmful content; and special zones for kids. However, there is still fragmentation and lack of interoperability; protection tools are not currently in use across all digital platforms and devices used for the distribution and consumption of audiovisual media content. ERGA president Madeleine de Cock Buning: *"It should not matter which device or platform someone is using for watching AV media content. Especially minors should have a similar level of protection against potentially harmful content no matter which device they use or where in the EU they are located."* Several respondents to the survey, carried out for the report, expressed a clear wish to have a harmonised system of content descriptors across the EU and protection tools that work independently across the different digital platforms and devices.

The report demonstrates real ambition for improvement within the industry. It notes that all VOD services covered in the report have pin-codes in place, irrespective of whether there is a legal obligation. A vast majority of the market players consider it natural to offer protection measures that are adequate, easy to use and future-proof to their customers; and consider that this serves their own commercial interest. More cooperation and further alignment would be facilitated by a European workshop initiated by ERGA, bringing together different players from the converged media industry. Such an event would give further insight and ultimately lead to the publication of a good practice guide.

Linked to the topic of protection of minors, ERGA will also focus on self-and co-regulation during 2017. In the Audiovisual Media Services (AVMS) Directive which is currently under revision, self- and co-regulation have been addressed as important mechanisms to achieve public policy objectives. Such systems of co-regulation are especially relevant in the online environment, where public authorities and market players share the responsibilities in a mutually beneficial way. With that in view the plenary discussed and adopted the planned activities of the ERGA subgroup on self- and co-regulation. In 2017 ERGA will explore, identify and align requirements of excellence for self-and co-regulation arrangements within the EU.

Furthermore, to be able to share knowledge and best practices in 2017, the ERGA Academia was launched for i.e. inter-vision, internships and working visits. The ERGA's Digital European Toolkit (DET), which was launched in 2016 to share best practices between regulators, will be upgraded to a new 2.0 version for more efficient access. Both the digital and offline exchange of good practices and experiences will enhance cooperation within ERGA. This should contribute to adequate harmonization in the application of the EU legislation underpinning the digital single market in the EU. In another subgroup ERGA is further developing its internal procedures in order to prepare for its tasks under the current and revised AVMS Directive.

Notes for Editors

The European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services consists of the national regulatory authorities in the field of audiovisual media services. ERGA advises the European Commission and facilitates cooperation between the regulatory bodies in the EU.

Madeleine de Cock Buning, President of the Dutch Media Authority, is the Chairperson of ERGA. The spokesperson of the Chair, Pieter Ton, can be contacted at + 31 6 533 755 03.