

There grows serious concern about the growing number of laws and directives directed towards the Internet in a wide range of countries. Hans Kliensteuber, Professor of Political Science at Hamburg University, points out that the tradition of censorship goes on in non-democratic states. In the United States, copyright law is already used to limit the free use of the Internet. He is also concerned about the European Copyright Directive in this regard.

OSCE Media Representative Freimut Duve stressed that the criminal exploitation of the Internet should not be tolerated and that parties responsible for illegal content should be prosecuted while the infrastructure of the Internet itself should not suffer.

Mr. Duve also said that the future freedom of the Internet could be guaranteed only through the distribution channels, clear commitment to the freedom of expression, together with a better understanding of the Internet's underlying technical infrastructure.

The Amsterdam Recommendations on Freedom of the Media and the Internet, issued by the OSCE Representative, cover a broad range of guidelines, with one dominating principle: no matter what technical means is used to channel the work of journalists to the public - television, radio, newspapers or the Internet - the basic constitutional value of freedom of the media must remain unchallenged. "This principle, which is older than most of today's media, is one that all modern European societies are committed to," reads the preamble.

The Amsterdam Recommendations also make clear that "in a modern democratic and civil society, citizens themselves should make the decision on what they want to access on the Internet. The right to disseminate and to receive information is a basic human right. All mechanisms for filtering or blocking content are not acceptable."

Exercise 44

Comment on the following statements.

1. Freedom of the press means freedom to print such of the proprietor's prejudices as the advertisers don't object to.
2. Newspapers and TV channels should be punished if they break the rules,

3. "In a modern democratic and civil society, citizens themselves should make the decision on what they want to access on the Internet."⁵
4. "The right to disseminate and to receive information is a basic human right."

Exercise 45

Write an essay of about 250 words on one of the topics below.

1. The government and politicians should control the mass media.
2. There cannot be free mass media.
3. All mechanisms for censoring content are not acceptable.

Additional reading

Exercise 46

Read the text that follows and say if the statements below are true or false.

1. The British press is controlled directly by the state.
2. In Britain anyone can launch a newspaper without special permission.
3. British newspapers can print anything they like about anyone.
4. The Press Council was founded about a hundred years ago.
5. The Press Council was set up with the only aim to judge readers' complaints and in this way to control the press.
6. The readers' complaints mostly concern untrue publications.
7. The decision on a case taken by the Press Council is obligatory for newspapers.
8. Sending an editor to prison would be an effective way of punishing his newspaper for an offence.

Press Freedom and Control in Britain

Britain is one of the few countries in the world where a newspaper can be started by anyone without a license. The press is not state-controlled and there is no government censorship. This does not mean,