

Press Release

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Council of Europe member states debate how to deal with the challenges of new media for freedom of expression

Reykjavik, 28.05.2009 - Ministers and representatives from the 47 member states of the Council of Europe, as well as experts and representatives of civil society, youth and the business community started today to discuss the challenges for freedom of expression posed by the so called new media and media-like services, such as search engines, blogs, social networks or ISPs.

At the opening, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, Minister of Education, Science and Culture of Iceland, said: "On an equal footing and in a forward-looking manner like in this Ministerial Conference, I believe that the Council of Europe is the most appropriate forum to bring together key stakeholder groups, including governments, the private sector and civil society, to shape the present and future evolution of the pan-European media landscape from a human rights perspective".

Philippe Boillat, Council of Europe Director General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs, pointed out that "there is a need to assess how freedom of expression and information can be protected in new media and media-like services, and also in which ways. I am confident this conference will help to clarify which should be the next steps by the Council of Europe in protecting these rights, which are fundamental for democracy".

"With new technology and new media, individuals do not now need the state to give them the tools of public expression. The floodgates to universal expression are wide open. Anyone with the right equipment and the right cultural and communication competence can broadcast their news and views to the entire world", said Karol Jakubowicz, keynote speaker at the conference. He called on the Council of Europe to "reconsider the practical meaning of Article 10 and elevate freedom of expression into a right to public expression, to be recognised, promoted and protected by member states".

Under the theme "A new notion of media?" the conference is organised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Iceland in cooperation with the Council of Europe. It aims to assess the recent social, cultural and technological changes in the media and communication landscape and to determine the direction of the Council of Europe's future work in this field. The conference will consider the adoption of a declaration and several resolutions on Friday 29 May.

On 26-27 May, the **European Youth Forum** organised an event to discuss the new challenges for media and communication policies, especially concerning young people, and made specific recommendations to the ministerial conference.

Practical information:

[Link to the ministerial conference programme](#)

- The ministerial conference is being **webcast** on www.ministerialconference.is

- For further information and for requesting interviews on the spot or by telephone, please contact Jaime Rodriguez (Tel. +33 3 89 99 50 42; jaime.rodriguez@coe.int)

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A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 47 member states.