

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

DECLARATION ON THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND INFORMATION

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 29 April 1982
at its 70th Session)*

The member states of the Council of Europe,

1. Considering that the principles of genuine democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights form the basis of their co-operation, and that the freedom of expression and information is a fundamental element of those principles ;
2. Considering that this freedom has been proclaimed in national constitutions and international instruments, and in particular in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights ;
3. Recalling that through that convention they have taken steps for the collective enforcement of the freedom of expression and information by entrusting the supervision of its application to the organs provided for by the convention ;
4. Considering that the freedom of expression and information is necessary for the social, economic, cultural and political development of every human being, and constitutes a condition for the harmonious progress of social and cultural groups, nations and the international community ;
5. Convinced that the continued development of information and communication technology should serve to further the right, regardless of frontiers, to express, to seek, to receive and to impart information and ideas, whatever their source ;
6. Convinced that states have the duty to guard against infringements of the freedom of expression and information and should adopt policies designed to foster as much as possible a variety of media and a plurality of information sources, thereby allowing a plurality of ideas and opinions ;
7. Noting that, in addition to the statutory measures referred to in paragraph 2 of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, codes of ethics have been voluntarily established and are applied by professional organisations in the field of the mass media ;
8. Aware that a free flow and wide circulation of information of all kinds across frontiers is an important factor for international understanding, for bringing peoples together and for the mutual enrichment of cultures,
 - I. Reiterate their firm attachment to the principles of freedom of expression and information as a basic element of democratic and pluralist society ;
 - II. Declare that in the field of information and mass media they seek to achieve the following objectives :
 - a. protection of the right of everyone, regardless of frontiers, to express himself, to seek and receive information and ideas, whatever their source, as well as to impart them under the conditions set out in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights ;

b. absence of censorship or any arbitrary controls or constraints on participants in the information process, on media content or on the transmission and dissemination of information ;

c. the pursuit of an open information policy in the public sector, including access to information, in order to enhance the individual's understanding of, and his ability to discuss freely political, social, economic and cultural matters ;

d. the existence of a wide variety of independent and autonomous media, permitting the reflection of diversity of ideas and opinions ;

e. the availability and access on reasonable terms to adequate facilities for the domestic and international transmission and dissemination of information and ideas ;

f. the promotion of international co-operation and assistance, through public and private channels, with a view to fostering the free flow of information and improving communication infrastructures and expertise ;

III. Resolve to intensify their co-operation in order :

a. to defend the right of everyone to the exercise of the freedom of expression and information ;

b. to promote, through teaching and education, the effective exercise of the freedom of expression and information ;

c. to promote the free flow of information, thus contributing to international understanding, a better knowledge of convictions and traditions, respect for the diversity of opinions and the mutual enrichment of cultures ;

d. to share their experience and knowledge in the media field ;

e. to ensure that new information and communication techniques and services, where available, are effectively used to broaden the scope of freedom of expression and information.