

to develop a body of knowledge on patterns of viewing, listening and reading; on what is transmitted; on possible impact on various receivers, in various situations and of various materials; on means of effectively restricting injurious transmissions. In other words: the committee recommends a comprehensive policy as a basis for the development of guidelines.

### *Implementation of the Protection Clause*

The state reports submitted so far reflect a stark divide between the industrialized liberal countries and other states on the degree of awareness and on measures taken in relation to harmful impact of media violence. The impression given is that several governments in the South had not had reasons to tackle this problem yet — or had little capacity for it. Vietnam is one of the countries which seem to consider an action for control:

Another worrying tendency is the increasingly common appearance in the press of items dealing with sex and violence, the justification for this being apparently that items of this sort attract more readers, an important consideration in the market-oriented economic conditions of Viet Nam. These items are not suitable for children, but their appearance and children's access to them are difficult to control.

Several countries mention that they have a system of censorship to "protect the child's development and psychological balance" (Burkina Faso) or to ensure that information material "are not harmful to them" (Senegal). The more concrete operations of these systems — and their effectiveness — are not explained in any detail. The reports submitted from the countries in eastern and central Europe also indicate that a more comprehensive policy in this field is lacking.

The reports from Canada and western European countries are, however, detailed and seem to be based on thorough national discussions over some years. Several approaches are tried simultaneously. All of these countries seem to have legislation against certain serious abuses; one example is the report from Germany where "certain representations of violence ... and pornographic materials" are prohibited in the criminal law.

Advertising is restricted. In Spain, for instance, the General Act on Advertising bans publicity which is detrimental to values and rights laid down in the constitution. Special rules regulate marketing of certain products (e.g. tobacco and beverages) or activities (e.g. betting and games of chance) in order to protect children.

Another common approach is to regulate the timing for the broadcasting of ads and other material. The idea is that programmes which could be harmful for children be broadcast late in the evenings (when children are supposed to be in bed). This could be stipulated through law, special instructions or voluntary agreements by the media themselves.

In France an independent authority, the Audio-visual Media Board, has been set up to ensure the protection of children in the planning of broadcasts. It has issued guidelines for the television channels and initiated proceedings against violations of them. In the United Kingdom the BBC, the Independent Television Commission and the Radio Authority have all established guidelines for the protection of children against material which could harm their mental, moral or physical development:

Guidelines on children's programmes cover the areas of violence, language and general taste and decency. These guidelines take into account the context of the action and the danger of imitative behaviour by children. In the area of news and factual programmes there is a particular awareness of a child's vulnerability and suggestibility. Broadcasters must also be aware of the dangers to children of programmes which include psychic or occult practices, smoking, drinking alcohol and drug taking.

Furthermore, there is in Britain a special council established in accordance with the 1990 Broadcasting Act which in its Code of Practice emphasizes the protection of children against unsuitable material on television.

The Canadian report says that considerable progress has been made in addressing the problem of violence in the media. This after a 14-year-old girl — whose sister had been robbed, raped and brutally killed — had organized a successful petition campaign for legislation eliminating violence on television:

In 1993, the Action Group on Violence in Television, which includes broadcasters, cable distributors, pay television and specialty programming services, advertisers and producers, announced a General Statement of Principles to be adhered to by all industry sectors as they strengthen their codes on television violence. The Canadian Association of Broadcasters was the first to have their revised code accepted by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.

In countries where there is one strong national broadcasting corporation it may be easier to estab-