Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 amending Directive 2010/13/EU on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) in view of changing market realities

DIRECTIVE (EU) 2018/1808 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

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THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 53(1) and Article 62 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

After transmission of the draft legislative act to the national parliaments,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee[(1)],

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions[(2)],

Acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure[(3)],

Whereas:

(1) The last substantive amendment to Council Directive 89/552/EEC[(4)], subsequently codified by Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council[(5)], was made in 2007 with the adoption of Directive 2007/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council[(6)]. Since then, the audiovisual media services market has evolved significantly and rapidly due to the ongoing convergence of television and internet services. Technical developments have allowed for new types of services and user experiences. Viewing habits, particularly those of younger generations, have changed significantly. While the main TV screen remains an important device for sharing audiovisual experiences, many viewers have moved to other, portable devices to watch audiovisual content. Traditional TV content still accounts for a major share of the average daily viewing time.

However, new types of content, such as video clips or user-generated content, have gained an increasing importance and new players, including providers of video-on-demand services and video-sharing platforms, are now well-established. This convergence of media requires an updated legal framework in order to reflect

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developments in the market and to achieve a balance between access to online content services, consumer protection and competitiveness.

(2) On 6 May 2015, the Commission adopted a communication entitled 'A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe' in which it announced a review of Directive 2010/13/EU.

(3) Directive 2010/13/EU should remain applicable only to those services the principal purpose of which is the provision of programmes in order to inform, entertain or educate. The principal purpose requirement should also be considered to be met if the service has audiovisual content and form which are dissociable from the main activity of the service provider, such as stand-alone parts of online newspapers featuring audiovisual programmes or user-generated videos where those parts can be considered dissociable from their main activity. A service should be considered to be merely an indissociable complement to the main activity as a result of the links between the audiovisual offer and the main activity such as providing news in written form. As such, channels or any other audiovisual services under the editorial responsibility of a provider can constitute audiovisual media services in themselves, even if they are offered on a video-sharing platform which is characterised by the absence of editorial responsibility. In such cases, it will fall to the providers with editorial responsibility to comply with Directive 2010/13/EU.

(4) Video-sharing platform services provide audiovisual content which is increasingly accessed by the general public, in particular by young people. This is also true with regard to social media services, which have become an important medium to share information and to entertain and educate, including by providing access to programmes and user-generated videos. Those social media services need to be included in the scope of Directive 2010/13/EU because they compete for the same audiences and revenues as audiovisual media services. Furthermore, they also have a considerable impact in that they facilitate the possibility for users to shape and influence the opinions of other users. Therefore, in order to protect minors from harmful content and all citizens from incitement to hatred, violence and terrorism, those services should be covered by Directive 2010/13/EU to the extent that they meet the definition of a video-sharing platform service.

(5) While the aim of Directive 2010/13/EU is not to regulate social media services as such, a social media service should be covered if the provision of programmes and user-generated videos constitutes an essential functionality of that service. The provision of programmes and user-generated videos could be considered to constitute an essential functionality of the social media service if the audiovisual content is not merely ancillary to, or does not constitute a minor part of, the activities of that social media service. In order to ensure clarity, effectiveness and consistency of implementation, the Commission should, where necessary, issue guidelines, after consulting the Contact Committee, on the practical application of the essential functionality criterion of the definition of a 'video-sharing platform service'. Those guidelines should be drafted with due regard for the general public interest objectives to be achieved by the measures to be taken by video-sharing platform providers and the right to freedom of expression.

(6) Where a dissociable section of a service constitutes a video-sharing platform service for the purposes of Directive 2010/13/EU, only that section should be covered by that Directive, and only as regards programmes and user-generated videos. Video clips embedded in the editorial content of electronic versions of newspapers and magazines and animated images such as GIFs should not be covered by Directive 2010/13/EU. The definition of a video-sharing platform service should not cover non-economic activities, such as the provision of audiovisual content on private websites and non-commercial communities of interest.

(7) In order to ensure the effective implementation of Directive 2010/13/EU, it is crucial that Member States establish and maintain up-to-date records of the media service providers and video-sharing platform providers under their jurisdiction and that they regularly share those records with their competent independent regulatory authorities or bodies and the Commission. Those records should include information about the criteria on which jurisdiction is based.

(8) Establishing jurisdiction requires an assessment of factual situations against the criteria laid down in Directive 2010/13/EU. The assessment of such factual situations might lead to conflicting results. In applying the cooperation procedures provided for in that Directive, it is important that the Commission can base its findings on reliable facts. The European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA) should therefore be empowered to provide opinions on jurisdiction upon the Commission's request. Where the Commission, in applying those cooperation procedures, decides to consult ERGA, it should inform the Contact Committee, including about notifications received from Member States under those cooperation procedures and about ERGA's opinion.

(9) The procedures and conditions for restricting freedom to provide and receive audiovisual media services should be the same for both linear and non-linear services.

(10) In accordance with the case-law of the Court of Justice of the European Union (the ‘Court’), it is possible to restrict the freedom to provide services guaranteed under the Treaty for overriding reasons in the general public interest, such as obtaining a high level of consumer protection, provided that such restrictions are justified, proportionate and necessary. Therefore, a Member State should be able to take certain measures to ensure respect for its consumer protection rules which do not fall in the fields coordinated by Directive 2010/13/EU. Measures taken by a Member State to enforce its national consumer protection regime, including in relation to gambling advertising, would need to be justified, proportionate to the objective pursued, and necessary as required under the Court's case-law. In any event, a receiving Member State must not take any measures which would prevent the re-transmission, in its territory, of television broadcasts coming from another Member State.

(11) A Member State, when notifying the Commission that a media service provider has established itself in the Member State having jurisdiction in order to circumvent the stricter rules in the fields coordinated by Directive 2010/13/EU, which would be applicable to that provider if it were established in the notifying Member State, should adduce credible and duly substantiated evidence to that effect. Such evidence should

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detail a set of corroborating facts allowing for such circumvention to be reasonably established.

(12) In its Communication to the European Parliament and to the Council on Better Regulation for Better Results – an EU Agenda, the Commission stressed that, when considering policy solutions, it would consider both regulatory and non-regulatory means, modelled on the Community of practice and the Principles for Better Self- and Co-regulation. A number of codes of conduct set up in the fields coordinated by Directive 2010/13/EU have proved to be well designed, in line with the Principles for Better Self- and Co-regulation. The existence of a legislative backstop was considered an important success factor in promoting compliance with a self- or co-regulatory code. It is equally important that such codes establish specific targets and objectives allowing for the regular, transparent and independent monitoring and evaluation of the objectives aimed at by the codes of conduct. The codes of conduct should also provide for effective enforcement. These principles should be followed by the self- and co-regulatory codes adopted in the fields coordinated by Directive 2010/13/EU.

(13) Experience has shown that both self- and co-regulatory instruments, implemented in accordance with the different legal traditions of the Member States, can play an important role in delivering a high level of consumer protection. Measures aimed at achieving general public interest objectives in the emerging audiovisual media services sector are more effective if they are taken with the active support of the service providers themselves.

(14) Self-regulation constitutes a type of voluntary initiative which enables economic operators, social partners, non-governmental organisations and associations to adopt common guidelines amongst themselves and for themselves. They are responsible for developing, monitoring and enforcing compliance with those guidelines. Member States should, in accordance with their different legal traditions, recognise the role which effective self-regulation can play as a complement to the legislative, judicial and administrative mechanisms in place and its useful contribution to the achievement of the objectives of Directive 2010/13/EU. However, while self-regulation might be a complementary method of implementing certain provisions of Directive 2010/13/EU, it should not constitute a substitute for the obligations of the national legislator. Co-regulation provides, in its minimal form, a legal link between self-regulation and the national legislator in accordance with the legal traditions of the Member States. In co-regulation, the regulatory role is shared between stakeholders and the government or the national regulatory authorities or bodies. The role of the relevant public authorities includes recognition of the co-regulatory scheme, auditing of its processes and funding of the scheme. Co-regulation should allow for the possibility of state intervention in the event of its objectives not being met. Without prejudice to the formal obligations of the Member States regarding transposition, Directive 2010/13/EU encourages the use of self- and co-regulation. This should neither oblige Member States to set up self- or co-regulation regimes, or both, nor disrupt or jeopardise current co-regulation initiatives which are already in place in Member States and which are functioning effectively.

(15) Transparency of media ownership is directly linked to the freedom of expression, a cornerstone of democratic systems. Information concerning the ownership structure of media service providers, where such ownership results in the control of, or the exercise of a significant influence over, the content of the services provided, allows users to make an informed judgement about such content. Member States should be able to determine whether and to what extent information about the ownership structure of a media service provider should be accessible to users, provided that the essence of the fundamental rights and freedoms concerned is respected and that such measures are necessary and proportionate.

(16) Because of the specific nature of audiovisual media services, especially the impact of those services on the way people form opinions, users have a legitimate interest in knowing who is responsible for the content of those services. In order to strengthen freedom of expression, and, by extension, to promote media pluralism and avoid conflicts of interest, it is important for Member States to ensure that users have easy and direct access at any time to information about media service providers. It is for each Member State to decide, in particular with respect to the information which may be provided on ownership structure and beneficial owners.

(17) In order to ensure coherence and legal certainty for businesses and Member States' authorities, the notion of ‘incitement to violence or hatred’ should, to the appropriate extent, be understood within the meaning of Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA[(7)].

(18) Considering the evolution of the means by which content is disseminated via electronic communications networks, it is important to protect the general public from incitement to terrorism. Directive 2010/13/EU should therefore ensure that audiovisual media services do not contain public provocation to commit a terrorist offence. In order to ensure coherence and legal certainty for businesses and Member States' authorities, the notion of ‘public provocation to commit a terrorist offence’ should be understood within the meaning of Directive (EU) 2017/541 of the European Parliament and of the Council[(8)].

(19) In order to empower viewers, including parents and minors, to make informed decisions about the content to be watched, it is necessary that media service providers provide sufficient information about content that may impair minors' physical, mental or moral development. That could be done, for example, through a system of content descriptors, an acoustic warning, a visual symbol or any other means, describing the nature of the content.

(20) The appropriate measures for the protection of minors applicable to television broadcasting services should also apply to on-demand audiovisual media services. That should increase the level of protection. The minimum harmonisation approach allows Member States to develop a higher degree of protection for content which may impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors. The most harmful content, which may impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors, but is not necessarily a criminal offence, should be subject to the strictest measures such as encryption and