COUNCIL OF
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REVISED NOTE

from : General Secretariat of the Council
to : Council
Subject : Reception in the EU of satellite channels broadcasting hate speech
- Information from the Belgian delegation

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Belgian delegation on the above subject which has been put on the provisional agenda, under "other business", for the forthcoming Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting on 21 and 22 May 2008.
Reception in the EU of satellite channels broadcasting hate speech

Satellite channels broadcasting hate speech and anti-Semitic messages can still be received in Belgium. The best-known example is the controversial Hezbollah TV channel Al Manar. The programmes of Al Manar contain anti-Semitic and hate-inciting messages persistently attacking Jews, Israel and the United States.

Given the anti-Semitic and hate-inciting nature of the programmes of Al Manar, they are incompatible with the EU rules and standards for television laid down in the “Television Without Frontiers” Directive. Therefore, the distribution of Al Manar through EU-based satellite companies was suspended in 2004 on the basis of Art. 22 bis of the “Television Without Frontiers” Directive (89/552/EEC).

However, due to the presence of satellites of the ArabSat and NileSat organisations, Al Manar and similar satellite channels can still be received in Europe, by means of large and manoeuvrable satellite dishes. This is deplorable, given the illegal anti-Semitic and racist messages they spread.

On 17 March 2005, the European Commission and audio-visual regulators from the 25 EU Member States agreed to take measures against broadcasters that incite to racial hatred. Co-operation would be set up with the regulatory authorities in the Mediterranean countries to make the fight against incitement to racial and/or religious hatred in audiovisual content a priority.

On 23 March 2005, a debate was held in the Council about the incitement to hatred in broadcasts from countries outside the European Union. At that time, the delegations took note of the Commission’s proposals to combat incitement to hatred in broadcasts, among other things by reinforcing co-operation between regulatory authorities. They recognised that methods must be considered to combat this kind of material more effectively in the context of the “Television Without Frontiers” Directive.

The mere fact that hate-sowing and anti-Semitic broadcasts can still be received today in Europe implies that the measures proposed in 2005 urgently need to be evaluated. It must be examined to what extent the proposed co-operation between regulatory authorities is operational and effective today.

Therefore the question to be addressed is what further actions could be taken at EU level to enhance the effectiveness of the measures proposed in 2005.