

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

# Working Documents

1983-1984

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DOCUMENT 1-55/83

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

tabled by Mr HAHN, Mr ALBER, Mr GEROKOSTOPOULOS,  
Mr DEL DUCA, Mrs GAIOTTI DE BIASE, Mr AIGNER,  
Mr McCARTIN, Mr ESTGEN, Mr PEDINI, Mr SÄLZER,  
Mr GHERGO, Mr BOCKLET and Mr BROK

on behalf of the EPP Group (Christian-Democratic Group)

pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

on the video cassette market



The European Parliament,

- A having regard to the 1949 Council of Europe Human Rights Convention to which the European Community acceded in 1982,
- B having regard to the following basic and inalienable principles :
  - the respect for human dignity and the inviolability of the human person, the body and health,
  - the duty to maintain and protect the moral and human values of European culture in this respect, which are vital to the operation of our democratic society,
  - freedom of opinion and freedom of information in a democracy
- C having regard to the increase in violence, especially among young people, and the rising crime rate,
- D concerned for the social behaviour and co-existence of the members of our society,
- E having regard to the rapidly expanding market in video cassettes brought about by technical advance,
- F having regard to the different legislation applying in each Member State and its ineffectiveness with respect to the video market,
- G having regard to the impossibility of preventing the access of young people to potentially harmful films available on video cassettes,
- H alarmed that the market is being flooded with video cassettes of films depicting unimaginable atrocities, including the dismemberment of human beings and cannibalism, and that these films are selling so well,
- I having regard to the imminent danger:
  - of the distortion of values, with acts of violence such as homicide, abduction and rape being made to appear harmless,
  - of imitation of these acts of violence by mentally impaired persons or those who already tend towards violence,
  - of sexual disorientation,

- of a loss of trust by the individual in his fellow men and environment,
- of undesirable effects on adults as well as children and young people,

J whereas about 20% of the European population are entitled to protection as minors,

K having regard to the demand in many Member States for appropriate action to combat these dangers, at national or Community level,

L not wishing to decry individual media or new technologies, but to have excesses curbed,

1. Requests the Commission to institute an immediate inquiry into the existence and extent of these dangers in the Member States, and to submit a report on the subject to the European Parliament;
2. Calls upon the Commission to consider the legal options under the Treaties of Rome for combatting these dangers by Community action;
3. Calls upon the Commission to draw up proposals for such action:
4. Proposes specifically the establishment of a European Inspection Office for material potentially harmful to young people,
  - composed of lawyers and officials from the Ministries of Education, of teachers and youth leaders, of psychologists, psychiatrists and journalists,
  - to draw up criteria defining the limits of what may be depicted in the media, in the light of the protection of minors, the threat to society and breaches of criminal law - these criteria to be confirmed by the European Parliament,
  - to ban the production and marketing of certain media products if so decided by a three-quarters majority of its members,
- appeals against whose decisions may be brought before the European Court of Justice,
- entitled to act on its own initiative or at the request of national inspection bodies, government bodies, youth welfare offices or at least one hundred citizens of the Community,

5. Recommends that the Inspection Office should examine the material from at least the following points of view:
  - (a) acts of violence: brutalizing material, which encourages or incites acts of violence or crimes,
  - (b) drug-taking: material which glorifies or makes light of drugtaking,
  - (c) race hatred: material which incites race hatred or fails to show the required degree of tolerance,
  - (d) tyranny: material which glorifies, makes light of or encourages the imitation of past or present tyrannies,
  - (e) glorification of war: material which glorifies or makes light of war,
  - (f) human dignity: material in which human dignity is grossly violated simply for the purpose of entertainment,
  - (g) pornography: material that might lead to sexual disorientation,
  - (h) discrimination against women: material which debases women by treating them merely as sexual consumer articles;
  
6. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and Council.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

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Largely undisputed estimates by the trade put recent sales of video recorders in the Federal Republic of Germany at :

1980 : 400,000 units  
1981 : 950,000 units

For this year video recorder sales are accordingly estimated at between 1.5 and 2 million, and in Germany the market is still only at 10% of saturation. It is estimated in the trade that by 1986 every second to third household will have a video recorder.

It must be assumed that the trend in the other Member States will be similar.

The market for video cassettes for sale or hire to the general public has grown at a similar rate, and is undergoing an unexpected boom. However, much freedom of opinion, artistic freedom and the absence of censorship count among the fundamental principles of freedom and democracy, the abuse of the free market, violating all the moral standards of our culture for commercial purposes, cannot be accepted. It is likely to discredit freedom of thought and to cause severe spiritual, moral and social damage to many people and not only the young.

According to the Federal German Government, increasing numbers of video cassettes chiefly portraying extreme violence against other persons as an end in itself are being sold and hired out. The trade estimates that horror, war and action films account for nearly 45%, i.e., nearly half of all sales. Pornographic films hold about 12% of the market.

The following examples will suffice to demonstrate the abominable nature of these films :

- Pregnant women are hacked open alive with pick axes in order to eat their embryos,
- Live victims have their eyes gouged out, their heads sawn to pieces, splinters and knives driven into their eyes, and
- Live victims are nailed to doors in order to make it easier to decapitate them.

The range of perverse violence is unimaginable. Its mental and social effects on its viewers are incalculable. Watching brutality on video is now part of the leisure activities of children and young people in Europe. Legislation in the Member States is at present inadequate for the successful prosecution of the makers and sellers of these video cassettes. Voluntary restraint, as has been introduced in some places, is also a failure, as it is frequently ignored or consciously evaded when films are being transferred to cassettes. As the problem now exists throughout Europe, a European initiative would be appropriate to resolve it.

