European Parliament: Resolution on Community Audiovisual Policy in the Digital Age

IRIS 2000-8:1/5

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On 6 August, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution on the Communication from the European Commission "Principles and guidelines for the Community's audiovisual policy in the digital age" (see IRIS 2000-1: 5).

The Resolution endorses in general terms the Commission's guidelines. As to the revision of the "Television without Frontiers" Directive, the European Parliament considers that it should be implemented in the course of 2002. The revised Directive should take a more incisive and effective approach as regards independent production and the circulation of European works.

The Commission shall use the revision to identify a core of key principles for all audiovisual services, irrespective of the method of transmission to users. Alternatively, it may draft directives laying down general rules for each type of audiovisual service, irrespective of transmission or broadcasting technique. Rules governing the new digital services should reaffirm the specific nature of audiovisual services in comparison with all the services of the Information Society.

The principle of separate legislation for transmission and content should be safeguarded. Right of access to networks should be guaranteed in accordance with the criteria of universality and affordability, and access to their content in accordance with criteria of universality, affordability, non-discrimination and transparency. Regulation must always be minimal, clear, simple, predictable and consistent, and applied only where competition is inadequate.

The European Parliament calls on the Commission, the Member States, and all major operators in the audiovisual sector to step up experiments with systems for filtering programmes and other methods of parental control for the protection of minors and, if applicable, to create the appropriate legal framework in the Member States. Self-regulation for audiovisual content should consist of a set of principles, preferably accompanied by shared codes of conduct, laid down by the relevant national and Community authorities.

Concerning competition and the audiovisual market, the European Parliament suggests assessing whether it would be advisable to put forward appropriate initiatives on media ownership in the new digital environment, with particular reference to vertical mergers. It especially calls on the Commission to promote

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the creation of a European body to safeguard transparency in the audiovisual and multimedia market and to counter market concentrations which may pose a threat to pluralism.

The European Parliament considers of crucial importance the role of public service broadcasting, which should be provided free-to-air. The Resolution closes with a list of initiatives concerning the audiovisual and related sectors as well as remarks on the international aspects of the audiovisual policy, especially stressing the necessity of defending Europe's cultural diversity and pluralism.

Report on the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'Principles and guidelines for the Community's audiovisual policy in the digital age' (COM(1999) 657 - C5-0144/2000 - 2000/2087(COS)), Final A5-0209/2000, of 18 July 2000.

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