Overview of 14th Meeting

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The European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA) held its 14th meeting on 27-28 September in Malta, at the invitation of the Broadcasting Authority of Malta. Over 90 representatives from 41 regulatory authorities responsible for broadcasting throughout Europe met to exchange information and experience on European and national regulatory issues in the field of radio and television.

Among the various topics that were discussed during the meeting, two are particularly worth highlighting. The main topic on the agenda was the regulation of television advertising in light of the future review of the "Television Without Frontiers" (TWF) Directive. The Head of Sponsorship of the UK Independent Television Commission, discussed the regulation of some important advertising developments such as interactive advertising, virtual advertising, split-screen and all-advertising channels. The Deputy Director of the European Consumers' Organisation (BEUC) dealt with the issue of commercial communication and children from a consumer protection point of view. The European Affairs Commissioner of the German Direktorenkonferenz der Landesmedienanstalten (the Directors' Conference of the association of German regulatory authorities for broadcasting - DLM) focused on concrete suggestions to modify the advertising provisions of the TWF Directive. The discussion showed that even though most EPRA members were sympathetic to the idea of simplifying existing advertising rules and supported a degree of deregulation, a consensus could not be reached on concrete measures (such as the abolition of advertising time-limits, or the restriction of advertising during children's programmes).

Another important topic on the agenda was the discussion of the pros and the cons of convergent regulatory authorities. Four years after the publication of the Green Paper on Convergence, there is a growing trend across Europe for nationally-based regulatory agencies to move towards the creation of a single or "convergent" body at the national level; or, at least, towards some form of structural reorganisation or simplification of the existing regulatory structures. However, most EPRA members had reservations about the idea of a convergent or single regulatory structure.

EPRA was set up in April 1995 in Malta with the aim of enabling representatives of regulatory authorities to meet regularly in an informal way to exchange information about national and European media regulation and to discuss practical solutions to legal problems related to the interpretation and application

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of media regulation. At present, 42 regulatory authorities are members of EPRA. The European Commission (DG Education and Culture) and the Council of Europe (Media Division) have the status of permanent observers. The next meeting of EPRA is scheduled for 16-17 May 2002 in Brussels, at the joint invitation of the Belgian regulatory authorities.

EPRA Press Release

http://www.epra.org/content/english/press/2001malta.html

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