European Platform of Regulatory Authorities: Overview of 16th Meeting

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On 24 and 25 October 2002, the 16 meeting of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA) took place in Ljubljana (Slovenia). The meeting was hosted jointly by the Slovenian Broadcasting Council, and the Telecommunications, Broadcasting and Post Agency of the Republic of Slovenia. Forty-four regulatory authorities were represented and were joined by permanent observers from the Council of Europe and the European Commission.

The plenary session focused on the regulation of public service broadcasting (PSB). Professor Carl-Eugen Eberle, Director of the Legal Department of ZDF, opened the session by explaining the German model of internal-structured supervision of ZDF. Erik Nordahl Svendsen from the Radio and Television Board of Denmark presented a report on an EPRA inquiry on regulatory models in 35 countries throughout Europe. The role of self- and co-regulation of PSB was capital in the discussion that followed these presentations.

Thereafter the participants split into two working groups that met simultaneously to discuss, on the one hand, media concentration and, on the other hand, political advertising.

The working group on media concentration opened with a presentation by Marie McGonagle from the National University of Ireland, Galway. The main aim of future media concentration regulation should be the safeguarding of key objectives through a proportionate, lighter regulation, focusing thereby on the content rather than on objective criteria. The question of how to monitor content quality in the digital environment was also raised. Sigve Gramstad, from the Norwegian Media Ownership Authority provided an overview of media monitoring systems in Europe. Catharina Nes, from the same authority, gave a brief introduction to the Media Register recently launched in Norway. This Directory is a database containing information about Norwegian media and their owners with the purpose of promoting greater transparency, awareness and knowledge about who owns what in Norwegian media. Finally, Inge Brakman from the Dutch Commissariaat voor de Media gave a presentation on the Dutch media monitoring system.

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In the second working group, Emmanuelle Machet, Secretary to the EPRA, addressed the concept and definition of political advertising, the legal status of paid political advertising, and presented various recent examples dealing with the subject in different European countries. The discussion focused mainly on the need for a clear definition of political advertising, on practical problems connected with paid political advertising, and on the implications of recent ECHR cases.

The meeting was rounded off by two reports on current developments in European media policy given by representatives of the Council of Europe (Media Division) and the European Commission (DG Education and Culture and DG Internal Market), as well as by a presentation on the broadcasting implications of the EU Directives on electronic communication networks and services by Hans-Peter Lehofer from KommAustria.

EPRA will hold its next meeting on 8 and 9 May 2003 in Naples (Italy) at the invitation of the Autorità per le Garanzie nelle Comunicazioni (Italian Communications Authority - AGCOM).

EPRA Press Release on the 16th meeting in Ljubljana

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