European Platform of Regulatory Authorities: Report on 17th meeting

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More than 100 delegates from the 35 Members of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA) held their 17 Meeting in Naples on 8 and 9 May 2003. The meeting marked a change in leadership. The new Executive Board of EPRA was elected. The Board now comprises five instead of three members and is chaired by Michael O'Keeffe, Chief Executive of the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland.

The first part of the plenary session was dedicated to practical aspects of a convergent regulatory authority. This was discussed with relation to the examples of AGCOM, Italy and OFCOM, United Kingdom. Both regulatory authorities result from the merging of previously independent administrations that were to look after different parts of the chain resulting in media services but that are now joined in order to allow for an encompassing approach of converging areas (for the UK the establishment process is still ongoing).

The second focal point of the plenary session was the potential for self-regulation of TV-content with respect to the protection of minors and the question of violence. The issue was illustrated by different systems for classifying media content used in France, the Netherlands and Germany. It became apparent that the degree to which those systems are based on self-regulatory structures varies and that state involvement remains important. In contrast, a purer form of self-regulation seems to be applied in Norway, whose system was the subject of a separate presentation.

Two additional topics were treated in two simultaneously meeting working groups. One workshop focused on programme performance of public service broadcasting and its mission in the digital era. This let to discussing how countries define the remit of their public service broadcasting and to what extent digital activities may be included. Also discussed were specific qualitative and quantitative content programme requirements and the monitoring of compliance with such requirements. The second working group dealt with sport, advertising and television. New forms of advertising such as minispots, virtual advertising, banner advertising in the stadium, the insertion of logos or "transparencies" were introduced and scrutinised under the provisions of the "Television without Frontiers" Directive. The examples came from Italy, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden.

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