European Commission: Final Phase in Consultations on EU Audiovisual Content Modernization

IRIS 2005-8:1/6

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In its bid to modernise the rules governing Europe's media industry, the Commission deployed plans a few years ago to revise the Television without Frontiers Directive. In order to do so effectively, the Commission initiated consultations in 2003 (see IRIS 2004-1: 6 and IRIS 2003-2: 5) which drew remarks and analyses from experts and stakeholders on future EU rules for audiovisual content.

The findings that emerged from these consultations are that the European audiovisual sector is drastically changing as a result of technological innovations which make media convergence more of a reality. This entails that traditional roles will interchange as telecom providers will soon be able to deliver broadcasting services while content providers gain access to the communications market.

This is precisely why the Commission has made it a priority to modernise the legislative framework for this industry. Rules must keep up with technology and the stated aim is to arm the sector with the most “modern and flexible [rules] in the world” in order to foster competition and increase consumer choice without, however, sacrificing objectives of general public interest such as cultural diversity and protection of minors.

The entire consultation process has been grouped and published in five issues papers which lay out the discussions held so far on the following topics:

- Towards a modern set of rules for audiovisual content: scope and jurisdictional matters;

- Commercial communications;

- Protection of minors and human dignity, right of reply;

- Cultural diversity;

- Rights to information and short extracts.

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These papers are available for the public to make observations and are meant to prepare for a major audiovisual conference co-organised with the UK presidency in Liverpool from 20-22 September 2005. Once comments from interested parties and conclusions from the Liverpool Conference have been compiled, the Commission will propose a new set of EU rules on audiovisual content by the end of 2005.

Thus ends the process of modernising the European media framework as part of a larger endeavour, dubbed the “i2010 initiative” (see IRIS 2005-7: 5), designed to keep European information society and media industries up to par. By covering any delivery platform (broadcast, high-speed broadband, third generation mobiles...) and linear or non-linear audiovisual content services, the rules now in the making strive to accomplish that mission for the audiovisual sector.

Issues Papers for the Liverpool Audiovisual Conference

http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/docs/reg/modernisation/issue_papers/ispa_mediaplur_en.pdf

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