Council of the EU: Conclusions on European Audiovisual Policy in the Digital Era

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On 25 November 2014, the Council of the European Union, meeting in its configuration for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport, adopted its Conclusions on European Audiovisual Policy in the Digital Era. This document outlines the Council's perspective on the future of EU audiovisual policy and makes invitations to the European Commission and Member States to take certain actions in this field.

The document starts by recognising the importance of audiovisual policy in fostering cultural and linguistic diversity and competitiveness, thereby representing a key area for the EU's Europe 2020 Strategy. It subsequently notes the "blurring of lines" between linear and non-linear services, which gives cause to re-examine existing legislation while presenting opportunities for innovation. It is also notes that audiences increasingly expect online content-on-demand services and that market fragmentation hinders cross-border service provision in this regard.

In light of these findings, the Council urgently invited the Commission to complete its review of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive and to submit a proposal for revision thereof. It also outlined certain areas to which particular attention must be paid, including: whether the distinction between linear and non-linear services is still appropriate in the digital area; the functioning of the "country of origin principle" for digital services; and the effectiveness of measures for the promotion of European works and possible alternatives. Besides the Directive's revision, the Council also invited the Commission to implement the process of a structured dialogue about film policy in Europe through the European Film Forum and to promote the use of the Erasmus+, Horizon 2020 and COSME programmes to finance activities in the audiovisual sector.

The Conclusions also include comments on other policy areas: the audiovisual business environment, public funding and access to finance and media literacy and film heritage. These are generally addressed to both the Commission and the Member States within their respective spheres of competence. As regards the business environment, the Council called for, among other things, the facilitation of licensing for multi-territory audiovisual media services and closer international cooperation in the audiovisual chain. This includes enhanced cooperation with the

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European Audiovisual Observatory. Furthermore, it suggested the encouragement of release window experimentation, such as simultaneous release on different platforms. Its recommendations regarding public funding include a rebalancing towards development, distribution and promotion. As to media literacy, the Council suggested an assessment of European citizens' media literacy levels and of the Creative Europe Programme's film literacy activities. It also called for the promotion of media literacy in both formal and non-formal education. Member States are also invited to foster the innovative reuse of audiovisual heritage and to make better use of EU structural funds in the protection, digitisation and circulation of the same.

Finally, the Commission is also invited to bring forward the necessary proposals to continue modernising the EU copyright framework in light of the digital shift in audiovisual services.

Council of the European Union, Council conclusions on European Audiovisual Policy in the Digital Era, 25 November 2014

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