

Expert Meeting calls for modification of EU Treaty to guarantee the role of public broadcasting

IRIS 1997-4:1/35

*Marina Benassi
Attorney at law*

According to a group of experts from the various branches of the industry, media and related fields, the EU Treaty should be modified in order to guarantee the role of public broadcasting services within the European Union. At the initiative of the Dutch Presidency, an Expert Meeting was held in Amsterdam on 17 and 18 February 1997 to examine the role of public service broadcasting in Europe. The proposed modification should, in the view of the experts, also aim at facilitating a closer and more intensive collaboration between the public broadcasting services of the Member States.

The group of experts agreed on three major issues: (i) The importance of free access to the information society, where public broadcasting plays a decisive role as a source of major national productions and programmes. (ii) The coexistence of a competitive market and public service broadcasting can be mutually beneficial. It should remain up to the individual member states to make decisions on the method of financing public service broadcasters. The experts suggested drafting a protocol . (iii) Co-operation between public service broadcasters needs to be enhanced both through the European Broadcasting Union and at a lower level, i.e. by way of agreements between smaller public service broadcasters.

The conclusions of the expert meeting have been forwarded to the European Commission and to the Member States, and will be used by the Dutch Presidency in the preparatory work for the Council.

Chairman's Conclusions of the Expert Meeting on Public Service in Broadcasting in Europe, Amsterdam, 17-18 February 1997.

