[GB] An overview of the current inquiries being undertaken by the UK Parliament's Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

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The UK Parliament's Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee (DCMS) is undertaking five enquiries. One enquiry concerns the economic impact music streaming is having on artists, record labels and the sustainability of the wider music industry, as previously reported in IRIS 2021-2/22.

DCMS is also enquiring into Broadband, including the introduction of 5G; it is examining how realistic the government's pledge to ensure that every home and business in the United Kingdom has gigabit-capable broadband by 2025 is, and what is needed to achieve it. The DCMS Committee will consider the role of 5G technology, and what initiatives such as the Shared Rural Network mean for improving mobile connectivity across the United Kingdom. Another function of the inquiry is to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on the introduction of full-fibre and 5G infrastructure.

A third DCMS enquiry is considering the future of public service broadcasting (PSB).The inquiry will look at the future of public service broadcasting within the wider media and digital industry, including funding, content and the regulation of PSBs. This also includes comparing PSBs with alternative subscription, streaming services and Freeview services.

The inquiry follows several developments that concern the BBC, including the government's consultation on decriminalising licence fee evasion and the cost of funding free TV licences for those aged over 75. The financial impact on the BBC, including cuts to some parts of its services, will form part of a broader examination of funding models.

Currently, regulations and obligations are placed on PSBs in return for benefits such as prominence and public funding. DCMS will consider whether SVODs and other streaming services should be subject to additional regulation.

Furthermore, DCMS will assess whether there is sufficient accessibility to different demographics and how a wholly Internet-based service would compare to the current terrestrial PSB model. DCMS will consider the role of PSBs in terms of services provided, accountability and whether public sector broadcasting is relevant - and what the suitable alternatives are. Other than the BBC, there are a

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number of other broadcasters across the United Kingdom with PSB responsibilities: ITV (Channel 3), Channel 4 and Channel 5 operate nationally, and STV (Scotland), S4C (Wales) and UTV (Northern Ireland) operate in the devolved nations.

A fourth DCMS inquiry concerns sport in our communities. The financial viability of community sports clubs is in doubt, with the future of many at risk even before the COVID-19 pandemic. The DCMS Committee wants to identify specific actions the government can take to guarantee the future survival of the community sports sector. The Committee is looking into sports governance, funding and the case for elite professional sports to support the lower leagues and grassroots.

The fifth future enquiry concerns the viability of UK music festivals, especially the support needed to see the return of events during 2021; in doing so, the inquiry will take account of the economic and cultural impact of festivals. DCMS will consider how to secure festivals in the face of the immediate pressures arising from COVID-19 and other long-term challenges

Finally, DCMS has a Sub-Committee on Online Harms and Disinformation. The DCMS Sub-Committee was set up in March 2020 to consider a broad range of issues in this area, including forthcoming legislation on Online Harms. This is a function arising from the consultative Online Harms White Paper launched in 2019 (see IRIS 2019-6/16).

Broadband and the road to 5G, UK Parliament

https://committees.parliament.uk/work/89/broadband-and-the-road-to-5g/

The future of public service broadcasting, UK Parliament

https://committees.parliament.uk/work/90/the-future-of-public-service-broadcasting/

The economics of music streaming, UK Parliament

https://committees.parliament.uk/work/646/economics-of-music-streaming/

Sport in our communities, UK Parliament

https://committees.parliament.uk/work/647/sport-in-our-communities/

The future of UK music festivals, UK Parliament

https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/378/digital-culture-media-and-sport-committee/news/123465/dcms-committee-to-examine-the-future-of-uk-music-festivals/

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