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Television without Frontiers Directive

A cornerstone of the European Union's audiovisual policy

"The "Television without Frontiers" Directive is the cornerstone of the European Union's audiovisual policy. It rests on two basic principles: the free movement of European television programmes within the internal market and the so called "broadcasting quotas" which commit the TV stations to reserve half of their half their broadcasting time for European works. The TVWF Directive also safeguards certain important public interest objectives, such as cultural diversity, the protection of minors and the right of reply.

The major elements of the directive are:

- Law applicable to television broadcasts
- Promoting the production and distribution of European works
- Access of the public to major events
- Rules of television advertising and sponsorship
- Protection of minors
- The right of reply.

On December 13th 2005, the European Commission adopted the legislative proposal for the revision of the Directive. In the European Parliament, the leading committee is the Committee on Culture and Education. Other committees will give opinion reports (Industry, Research and Energy - Economic and Monetary Affairs - Internal Market and Consumer Protection - Women - Civil Liberties). The first reading in the plenary is scheduled for December 2006.

The most relevant changes of the new proposal include:

- The inclusion of "non-linear" audiovisual services, such as on-demand films or news, which the viewer "pulls" from a network and the implementation of a basic regulation for them
- More flexible advertising rules
- Establishing a legal basis for product placement.

One of the most crucial points from the Green perspective is the introduction of a legal framework for product placement in certain programmes which we do not accept. The credibility of programmes must remain - the editorial independence of European TV is a cornerstone for a free media structure.

Furthermore we have to decide very carefully whether the liberalisation of advertising proposed by the Commission takes adequate account of the interests and protection requirements of the consumers.
We also have serious concerns about the extension of restrictions for commercial communication on TV towards new internet based services. We are in favour of a European wide right of short reporting and of

better conditions for independent producers.

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