Press release | 09.12.2015

EU copyright and online content rules

Commission fails to dismantle digital borders

The European Commission today presented a 'communication' setting out its plans for reforming EU copyright rules, as well as a legislative proposal on the portability of legally acquired digital content. Commenting on the proposals, Greens/EFA vice-president and copyright spokesperson **Julia Reda** said:

"While it is welcome that the Commission is finally looking to update the EU's outdated rules regarding digital content and copyright, the piecemeal approach in today's proposals will fail to properly dismantle digital borders.

"The proposed new rules on the portability of digital content only address a narrow spectrum of the problems faced by users. The proposals will clearly benefit those who have subscriptions to providers like Sky or Netflix and want to use them while abroad. However, geoblocking is a problem that most adversely affects those who need access to services not offered in their countries of residence, such as linguistic minorities or immigrants. Today's proposals would continue their inability to access culture and knowledge in their own language or from their countries of origin. We will look to rectify this in the legislative process.

"Overall, the copyright reform proposals are a far cry from commitment by Commission president Juncker to 'break down national silos' in copyright and ignore many demands made by the EU Parliament. The Commission is dragging its feet on introducing minimum standards for user rights across the EU and not even considering important demands like giving libraries the right to lend ebooks or protecting content that belongs to the public from falling under copyright again when it's digitised. It is seriously regrettable that the Commission is persisting with the misguided idea of an ancillary copyright law for press publishers – a 'Google snippet fee': you can't fix a bad idea by implementing it more widely.*

"It is, however, welcome that the Commission is looking to re-examine the issue of freedom of panorama, like the right to freely use photos of public buildings, in response to a clear public demand. The Commission must follow through and introduce this as a pan-European copyright exception.

"The restrictive way the Commission plans to implement the much-needed Text and Data Mining exception, meant to remove barriers to applying modern research methods, might actually make matters worse, especially for independent researchers and startups. The right to datamine content should follow automatically from the right to access such content, not be an additional privilege restricted to 'public interest research organisations'."

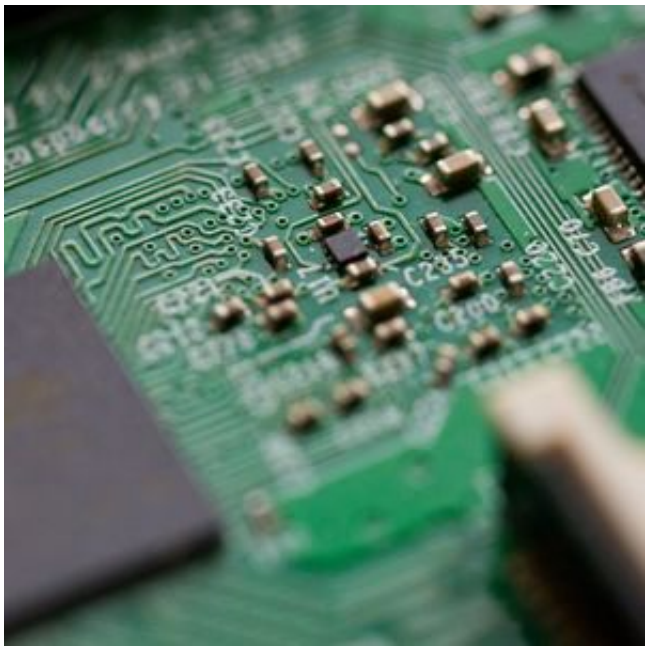
* The European Parliament set out its position on copyright reform in July, when it adopted a report drafted by Julia Reda.

Julia Reda will host an event providing a first analysis of the proposals on portability of digital content tomorrow at 14.00 in the European Parliament. More details: https://juliareda.eu/events/portability-opportunities-for-cultural-diversity-dec-10-2015/

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Felix Reda

Vice-President

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