Television broadcasting activities. 'Television without frontiers'

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The co-rapporteur, Mr Galeote Quecedo (EPP, E), presented the compromise amendments that had been tabled again at second reading. In his view, the setting of European quotas did not constitute an indispensable condition for guaranteeing the development of the broadcasting industry. In fact, the EU's decision to set up barriers could serve as an example for non-European competitors and this could well make it difficult for the European broadcasting industry to penetrate future markets, such as that of Latin America. On the other hand, the European industry could benefit from direct financial aid under the Media programme or by way of the Guarantee Fund. As regards the new interactive services the two co-rapporteurs thought it premature to include in the regulations those services that were still at the start-up stage. Concerning the placing of restrictions on the amount of advertising being broadcast, the Committee on Culture had sought to achieve a balance between the needs of the market and consumer protection. As regards major sporting events, however, limitations had been imposed on the exclusive rights of broadcasters in order to allow television viewers live access to events such as the Olympic Games and the World Cup. Finally, with regard to the protection of minors from broadcasted images of violence and pornography, the co-rapporteur pointed out the deficiencies in the common position. The co-rapporteur also proposed, firstly, that broadcasters should set up bodies to classify programmes and, secondly, that television sets be fitted with a coding system for parents and guardians. The second co-rapporteur, Mr Hoppenstedt (EPP, A), took the view that the same minimum standards should be applied irrespective of the technical means used for transmission or broadcasting. Moreover, as regards advertising, he thought that this issue was simply a matter of viewers' choice, stating that people could change channels if they were annoyed by too much advertising. Finally, he thought that discussions should be held with consumers, as regards the provision of protection for minors, and with sports organisations, with regard to the broadcasting of major sporting events. The Chairman of the Committee on Culture, Mrs Castellina (GUE/NGL, I), pointed to the fact that most of the amendments adopted at second reading had been the result of a compromise and went on to state that the European cultural market should protect future generations from the impoverishment of imagination and the loss of cultural identity. With this in mind the Committee on Culture had excluded 'video on demand' from the application of the quota system for European broadcasted works and for investment. While declaring that the Commission backed Parliament in its support for a European broadcasting policy, by way of the 'Television without Frontiers' Directive, Commissioner Oreja pointed out that he was not in a position to accept some of the amendments tabled. To be precise, he rejected Amendment No 10 (recital), No 15 on teleshopping, which was a contractual activity, and Nos 16, 17, 51 and 53, which were incompatible with the criteria for the sovereignty and legal competence of the Member States; he also rejected in part Amendments Nos 16 and 17, which contradicted the recent legal precedent set by the Court of Justice (ruling of 10/9, Comm. v. UK); Amendment No 19 was also incompatible with Article 189(a) of the Treaty, since a directive providing for financial penalties for the non-respect of quotas would have an excessively restrictive impact at Member State level, while Amendment No 26 was unacceptable because the ten-year deadline for assessing the impact of the Directive was considered too long. As far as television advertising was concerned, the Commissioner did not agree with the very restrictive quantity limits proposed for teleshopping. Finally, as regards the protection of minors, Mr Oreja agreed with the amendment on filtering devices, but thought that the one-year period for obtaining compliance was too short. In brief, he stated that he was prepared to accept 28 of the amendments.