

# Audiovisual policy: media and digital technology

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The Council held a first policy debate on the proposals presented by the Commission on 14 December 1999 on the new programme in support of the audiovisual industry. MEDIA Plus follows MEDIA I and MEDIA II and covers the period 2001 to 2005. The programme comprises: -a proposal for a decision on the implementation of a training programme for professionals in the European audiovisual industry ("MEDIA - Training"); -a proposal for a Decision on the implementation of a programme to encourage the development, distribution and promotion of European audiovisual works ("MEDIA Plus - Development, Distribution, Promotion"). The debate revolved around a number of questions which the Presidency had drawn up for the attention of the Council and which included: 1. "horizontal" questions relating to both proposals for decisions touching on the programme objectives and proposed approach as well as the balance between the industrial objectives and respect for linguistic and cultural diversity; 2. questions relating to MEDIA Plus (Development, Distribution and Promotion) as regards the relevance of the areas of intervention adopted and the importance to be attached to new technologies; 3. questions relating to MEDIA Training concerning the relevance of the training areas and the best way of ensuring coherence and complementarity between MEDIA Training and MEDIA Plus. Following the discussion of these issues, the Presidency drew the following conclusions: -there was wide-ranging consensus among the delegations on the Commission's proposals as they stood; -the proposals were generally considered adequate insofar as they offer the necessary proportion of subsidiarity between national and Community aid; -the proposed programme is appropriately geared towards the different contexts and national features, largely due to the measures suggested for positive discrimination; -several delegations identified the sectors of promotion and distribution as the weak links in the European audiovisual industry and thus requested that most funding go to these areas; -special attention should be paid to the use of new technologies in the framework of MEDIA Plus, while at the same time ensuring enough flexibility for the programmes implementation; moreover, complementarity with other Community policies and initiatives in this field should be sought; -as regards training, emphasis should be placed on further training for professionals; -pending the European Parliament's opinion, the Council has not yet taken a position on the overall budget. The Chairman said that these activities would be pursued vigorously until the end of the Portuguese Presidency and that the incoming French Presidency had let it be known that it would do its utmost so that the programme could enter into force in early 2001 as planned.