Audiovisual industry: MEDIA II 1996-2000, development and distribution of European works

1995/0027(CNS) - 05/07/1995 - Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report

The ESC noted that access to funding was subject to a feasibility study by the Commission acting under the advisory committee procedure. This ran counter to the Commission's declared intention to 'make greater use of automatic aid systems rather than selective aid systems'. Although the action and funding procedures were clearly stated in the programme, it was important to note that a whole range of issues remained rather hazy. The proposal repeatedly mentioned 'independent European production companies' as the main beneficiaries, without actually defining what kind of independence was meant, or how that independence would be verified. Furthermore, the proposal ignored the urgent problem posed by the large media conglomerates and their international links, whereas it should suggest measures to avoid production and distribution subsidies going to these groups. The ESC felt that in order to avoid this, and in keeping with the need for transparency, a limit should be set on company size, using the criteria adopted for aid to SMEs. Monitoring procedures should also be made available: they could at least be required to publish details of their company structure and accounts. The ESC would like to see other development and distribution measures calculated to bring economic benefits without requiring direct funding. These might involve strengthening intellectual property rights, tax deductions, or long-term guarantees on soft loans.