Audiovisual policy: media and digital technology

2000/2087(COS) - 13/07/2000

The committee adopted a report by Valter VELTRONI (PES, I) on the Commission communication on the Community's audiovisual policy in the digital age. The committee broadly endorsed the proposals put forward by the Commission. It stressed the need for a formal revision by 2002 of the "television without frontiers" directive to take account of technological developments and the services available as a result of digitalisation. It also wanted private and public television broadcasters to be required to allocate part of their revenue to the production and acquisition of European audiovisual programmes. However, in general regulation should be confined to what was strictly essential, with the market left to operate in accordance with the rules on competition. The rules must guarantee pluralism as well as linguistic and cultural diversity, while also protecting freedom of choice in accordance with the criteria of universality and affordability. To protect minors, the committee advocated further experimentation with programme filtering technology and other parental control methods. Other points raised in the report included the need to prevent the emergence and continuation of dominant positions in the audiovisual industry while not hindering the necessary formation of strong European groups able to compete internationally; the need for competition policy for the audiovisual sector to take account of the cultural uniqueness of the industry; and the central role of public service broadcasting in safeguarding pluralism. Public service broadcasting should be provided free to air, with universal transmission and access ensured. The Commission was also asked to propose further initiatives to develop cyber-cinema and to promote the simultaneous distribution of European cinematographic works. As regards intellectual property rights in the new digital environment, the committee believed the directive on copyright and related rights in the information society should be beefed up, particularly as the internet was one of the main new media for the dissemination of audiovisual works.