Television without frontiers: implementation of Directive 89/552/EEC. 3rd report

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The committee adopted the report by Ruth HIERONYMI (EPP-ED, D) on the Commission's 3rd report on the application of the "Television without Frontiers" directive. It welcomed the Commission's positive overall assessment of the directive and urged all the Member States as well as the applicant countries to strengthen their commitment to applying it, for example by incorporating the directive into their national legislation. It also called for the target date for reviewing the directive (end of 2002) to be brought forward as much as possible. The committee pointed out that, in the 5 years since the directive was last amended, the climate in which the television industry operated had changed considerably, with new services using new technologies and a huge increase in the number of broadcasters. It therefore felt that the scope of the directive should be broadened to cover the new audiovisual services and called on the Commission to take account in its review of the new developments in the sector, such as webcasting on the Internet, electronic programme guides (EPG), interfaces (API) and intellectual property issues (i.e. digital private copying and caching). The Commission and the Member States were urged to facilitate the transition to digital technology. The report also emphasised the importance of conducting a broad debate in order to arrive at a consistent, united position on balancing the need to safeguard European cultural diversity with the demands of the global market. It noted with concern the continuing imbalance between material produced in Europe and that imported from the USA for the European market. Lastly, it stressed the need to harmonise the current complex system of rules and practices relating to the protection of minors, whilst maintaining Member States' independence with regard to national restrictions in this area.