Audiovisual policy: media and digital technology

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In approving the report drafted by Mr Walter VELTRONI (PES, I), the European Parliament adopted the resolution on a Communication from the Commission on the 'Principles and guidelines for the Community's audiovisual policy in the digital age'. The European Parliament calls for an early revision of the 'television without frontiers' directive, by 2002 at the latest. The Commission, the Council and the Member States are called upon to ensure that the rules governing the new digital services offered via convergent networks reaffirm the specific nature of audiovisual services by comparison with all the services of the information society. Moreover, the importance of universal services must be recognised as a means of preventing social exclusion by ensuring that consumers have affordable access to communications services. In relation to the protection of minors, the Parliament calls on the Commission and the Member States, public broadcasting services, private broadcasters and all major operators in the audiovisual sector to step up experiments with systems for filtering programmes and other methods of parental control. It was highlighted by the Parliament that a Europe-wide coordination between the national regulatory authorities and the audiovisual sector regulators should be ensured. With regard to other initiatives concerning the audiovisual sector and related sectors, the Parliament calls on the Commission and the Member States to take steps to safeguard the balanced development of the digital audiovisual sector and the European music and digital broadcasting sectors. It is suggested that a study be carried out of the socio-economic impact of radio in Europe, focusing in particular on the role of local broadcasters, and to promote a move to the use of DAB standard. The Commission is also called on to propose further intiatives to develop cyber-cinema and to promote the simultaneous distribution of European cinematographic works in the Member States, on the basis of the experience acquired in connection with the Media Training and Media Plus programmes. In terms of financing, the Commission should take steps to encourage additional financing for European cinema, including the establishment of a guarantee fund. Lastly, on the international scene, the European Parliament calls on the Commission to ensure that, in international negotiations, the community insists on the distinction between regulating the medium and regulating content, so as to avoid the risk of audiovisual services being included among those which follow the rules of the networks and/or electronic commerce.