Television broadcasting activities. 'Television without frontiers'

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This report is the fifth report from the Commission on the application of Directive 89/552/EEC “Television without Frontiers”.

The present Report follows the Fourth Report, adopted in January 2003, and deals with the application of the Directive in the years 2003 and 2004. In an annex to the Fourth Report, the Commission proposed a work programme to open a debate on the possible need to adjust the EU regulatory framework in this field because of the developments in markets and technologies. Accordingly, the Commission launched consultations in 2003 for a review of the Directive. The present Report has to be seen in the context of this debate.

During the years up to 2004, the favourable trend in the development of the EU audiovisual industry reached a high degree of maturity. At the same time, some business models had to face hard tests and in some areas operators underwent a process of consolidation. New business opportunities, notably “Digital Terrestrial Television”, and the delivery of audiovisual services through new technological platforms have expanded the presence of such services on the market reinforcing the well-known phenomenon of fragmentation of supply. This trend seems to be stabilising against the background of a softening in advertising resources and little prospect of an increase in public funding.

As regards enlargement, the new Member States, which joined the EU on 1 May 2004, were required to notify their legislation transposing the Directive. An assessment carried out shows that they have complied with their obligations in this respect. The EU is now preparing for the next enlargement. Bulgaria and Romania are expected to join the European Union in 2007. Croatia and Turkey are candidate countries. As regards the Western Balkan countries, the European Council has underlined their prospects of EU membership on several occasions. The Commission pursues a strategy for the convergence of the audiovisual policies of these countries with European media standards, in cooperation with the Council of Europe.

The report concludes by stating that the “Television without Frontiers” Directive continues to function successfully in ensuring the freedom to provide television services in the European Union. The fundamental objectives of public interest that the Directive aims to safeguard in establishing a minimum harmonisation in the internal market remain valid. The Directive provides effective regulation for the European audiovisual sector and the Report confirms the validity of the common European approach to audiovisual matters.

However, in view of market and technological developments, a need to review the current EU regulatory framework, as outlined above, has become apparent. Therefore, the Commission intends to come up with a proposal for revision of the Directive at the end of 2005.