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15 May 2009

The funding of public service broadcasting

Committee Opinion¹

Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

Rapporteur: Mr Denis MacSHANE, United Kingdom

A. Conclusions of the committee

1. The Political Affairs Committee welcomes the report by Mr Markku Laukkanen on “The funding of public service broadcasting”, and shares the main conclusions and suggestions contained in the draft recommendation presented by the Committee on Culture, Science and Education.
2. The report rightly emphasises the important role of public service broadcasting as a major source of unbiased information and diverse political opinions. In this function, it contributes to the freedom of the media and of information which are cornerstones of a viable democracy. The report usefully recalls the high standards which public broadcasters must comply with, in terms of objectivity, fairness and independence from interference by political actors and business interests, in order to fulfil this important task.
3. More broadly, as the report points out, public service broadcasting participates in forming national information, cultural and educational spaces, and should support non-commercial objectives such as social progress, public interest in democratic processes, intercultural understanding and social integration. As the media landscape is rapidly changing, public service broadcasters must keep up with technical progress and continue to be able to offer adequate services, through the whole range of technologies available, to all categories of audience. They should therefore continue to benefit from sufficient public funding, with necessary accountability mechanisms as appropriate. In this context, the committee underlines that the functioning of public broadcasters must be under the scrutiny of genuinely independent supervisory bodies.
4. Furthermore, taking into account that both the specific needs of domestic audiences and the national audiovisual landscape may vary substantially from one country to another, the committee supports the strong message contained in the report as regards the powers and responsibilities of national authorities, including parliaments, to decide on the specific mission, structure and funding of their respective public service broadcasters, in accordance with national or regional circumstances and requirements.
5. Finally, in the view of the committee, regular ministerial meetings at the level of the Council of Europe offer an appropriate framework, and must remain the main forum, for the pan-European co-ordination of national policies in the field of public service media.
6. Accordingly, the committee wishes to suggest several amendments aimed at supporting and strengthening the general thrust of the draft recommendation presented by the Committee on Culture, Science and Education.

1. See [Doc. 11848](#) tabled by the Committee on Culture, Science and Education.



B. Amendments proposed by the Political Affairs Committee

Amendment A (to the draft recommendation)

In paragraph 5, in the first and in the second phrases, replace the word “should” with the word “must”.

Amendment B (to the draft recommendation)

In paragraph 5, after the words “they have the possibility and obligation to serve also minority viewers”, add the words:

“and people with special needs”

Amendment C (to the draft recommendation)

In paragraph 10, replace the second sentence with the following:

“The Assembly regrets tendencies within the European Union to restrict those national powers under Internal Market regulations and a growing number of complaints brought by private operators before the European Commission against EU member states.”

Amendment D (to the draft recommendation)

In paragraph 10, after the second sentence, insert a new sentence as follows:

“The application of EU law should not restrict member states’ powers to adapt the public service broadcasting remit to their own national needs.”

Amendment E (to the draft recommendation)

At the end of paragraph 10, add a new sentence as follows:

“In this respect, the Assembly recalls that the 1997 Amsterdam Protocol to the Treaty establishing the European Union clearly favours subsidiarity and national competencies for EU member states in this field.”

Amendment F ² (to the draft recommendation)

In paragraph 11, delete the words:

“...the Amsterdam Protocol to the Treaty establishing the European Union of 1997 as well as...”

Amendment G (to the draft recommendation)

At the end of paragraph 11, add a new sentence as follows:

“The Unesco Convention has also been signed by the EU.”

Amendment H (to the draft recommendation)

In paragraph 12, replace the third sentence with the following:

“However, public acceptance of funding public service broadcasting might be decreasing in view of the increasing audiovisual content available through converging media platforms and the Internet.”

Amendment I (to the draft recommendation)

In paragraph 13, delete the last sentence.

2. Only if Amendment E is agreed to (and a reference to the Amsterdam Protocol is inserted in paragraph 10).

Amendment J (to the draft recommendation)

In paragraph 16.2., at the end of the sentence, add the following words:

“...on all available platforms so as to reach all audiences, and in particular young people”.

Reporting committee: Committee on Culture, Science and Education

Committee for opinion: Political Affairs Committee

Reference to committee: Reference 3367 of 1 October 2007

Opinion approved by the committee on 27 April 2009

Secretariat of the committee: Mr Perin, Mrs Nachilo, Mr Chevtchenko, Mrs Sirtori-Milner, Ms Alléon