

Press Statement

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Consumer groups and public broadcasters join forces to ensure Europeans get better cross-border access to TV and radio programmes

The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) urge EU decision makers to give citizens the keys to enjoy more TV and radio programmes from across Europe. This can be done through new copyright licensing rules which meet the needs of the Digital Single Market.

At today's event in the European Parliament (Strasbourg) BEUC and the EBU expressed their joint support for the adoption of draft copyright licensing rules on broadcasters' online transmissions and retransmissions. Commission Vice-president Andrus Ansip and parliamentary rapporteur Tiemo Wölken (S&D, DE) also gave their views on the draft legislation.

Inspired by the 1993 Cable and Satellite Directive, these draft rules put forward by the European Commission in September 2016 would provide broadcasters and rightholders with new licensing tools to offer more TV programmes and services online and across borders. At the same time, they would not alter the principles of contractual freedom and territorial licensing, which are of utmost importance for Europe's audiovisual sector.

Invited to present the proposal and its positive impact for EU citizens, Commission Vice-president Andrus Ansip said: "Our proposal will make it significantly easier for broadcasters to offer online programmes across borders, but also incentivize the broadcasters to use this possibility. My goal is to double the content available to consumers so that everyone across Europe can get the most out of our rich cultural diversity within the Digital Single Market."

BEUC Deputy Director General Ursula Pachl highlighted why online access to Europe's cultural diversity matters a great deal for consumers: "Current copyright rules hamper consumers' ability to enjoy the full breadth of Europe's cultural diversity. When recent studies show that 82% of Europeans want to watch and listen content through legal offers instead of trying to circumvent access barriers, EU legislators should vigorously take the path of more choice rather than upholding artificial borders."

She added: "With this proposal the EU is giving the keys to broadcasters to unlock the Single Market and provide to consumers a wider choice of TV and radio programmes."

EBU Director General Ingrid Deltenre said: "Over 20 years ago the EU introduced new copyright licensing rules which made the Internal Market for satellite and cable TV a reality for European consumers. Now, we are in digital age. Broadcasters need a similar enabling instrument for their online services and the retransmission of their programmes. The current absence of adapted copyright licensing rules is in this regard an anachronism."

She added: "Subject to some improvements, the new rules can give more access to TV and radio programmes online in the EU Digital Single Market and they will not weaken rightsholders' and broadcasters' contractual freedom."

MEP Tiemo Wölken, who is currently shepherding the proposal through Parliament, concluded: "As a 'digital native' who is using online services on a daily basis I want to keep up with the current changes in consumer behaviour. An increasing amount of citizens, particularly the younger generation, is watching television programmes online. It is important to mirror these developments with legislation which is fit for the future."

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