European Broadcasters

Given the key role of broadcasting, including digital and enhanced broadcasting in the years ahead, in achieving an information society in which all citizens are included and can participate and in view of the contribution of broadcasters to fundamental values such as freedom of expression and information, media freedom and pluralism and cultural diversity, which should underpin the information society and which already form part of the European acquis the television and radio broadcasters supporting the present text propose the inclusion of the following principles and objectives in the documents for the Summit:

1  Providing quality content for the information society should be a priority
Communications technology is not an end in itself but a means of supplying and conserving information and content, and of increasing the public's choice and of opening up options for interactivity and personalization. The information society can thrive only if citizens are provided with full information for democratic participation at all levels, including unbiased information and a plurality of opinions, and if they have access to a wide range of audiovisual productions and other content, including material reflecting national and regional cultures and content relevant to local communities. The electronic media, and public service broadcasting in particular, have a responsibility to produce, gather and distribute diverse quality content to meet the political, social and cultural needs of democratic societies.

2  Fundamental freedoms and values should be respected and promoted
To guarantee fundamental freedoms, rights and values, not least in the context of globalization, a legal framework is needed. Freedom of expression and information, pluralism and cultural diversity should underpin the electronic media and the information society as a whole. Effective safeguards are needed to guarantee media independence and pluralism and access to information, and to protect human dignity, privacy and intellectual property. The principle of legality is essential not only for the protection of rights and freedoms but also, for example, for ensuring efficient and orderly use of frequencies. The public's access to a rich variety of content can be improved by such measures as greater coherence in advertising/sponsorship rules to avoid discrimination against broadcasters, improved protection of broadcasters' investment in content, the transformation of state-controlled media into editorially independent public service organizations, and the creation of open and interoperable platforms for new electronic media.
3 Radio and television are important means of fostering development and social cohesion in the digital world

By providing information and entertainment for all, radio and television are closely linked to citizens' daily lives. Thanks to their presence in almost every home, broadcasting services are ideally placed to help ensure democratic, social, cultural and economic development, to promote discussion of issues of general interest and to deliver reliable information related to education, health care, etc.

Free-to-air broadcasting with universal reach offers everyone affordable access to information. It alone ensures, for example, that all members of society continue to enjoy live coverage of major sporting and other events. Public service broadcasting is required to cater for all sections of the public, including vulnerable and minority groups. Commercial broadcasting, whether funded by advertising or subscription, contributes to the delivery of key policy goals such as the production of original and varied content and the existence of a plurality of news sources.

The new opportunities arising from the information age should serve the whole range of communities. Digital broadcasting, with its interactive enhancements, will be an essential tool for making the services of the information society widely available. In this way it will contribute to bridging the digital divide.

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