

Public consultation on the revision of the ‘Television without Frontiers’ Directive

The Newspaper Society’s submission on Issues Paper for the Audiovisual Conference in Liverpool:

Commercial Communications

The Newspaper Society represents the regional newspaper industry. Its members publish around 1300 regional and local newspaper titles throughout the United Kingdom. Its publications are read by around 40 million adult readers-about 83% of the adult population - and it attracts around £3 billion advertising revenue. Surveys have rated it as the most trusted media.

The Newspaper Society refers the European Commission to the Society’s response to the Issues Paper on Rules Applicable to Audiovisual Content Services. The Newspaper Society opposes the extension of the Television Without Frontiers directive to online services in the way defined. In respect of commercial communications, the Newspaper Society considers that there is no need to extend broadcasting rules to online services or to tighten regulatory controls through new statutory, co-regulatory or mandatory self-regulation. No such action by the Commission is justified and it should not attempt to introduce such new controls by way of revision of the Television Without Frontiers directive.

In the United Kingdom, there is already a complex domestic framework of general and specific consumer protection, criminal and civil law that control non-broadcast, advertising, marketing and other commercial communications. In addition, there is also a robust, effective and long established industry self-regulatory system, which is supported by all sectors of the industry. Unlike legislative and co-regulatory or other mandatory regulation, self-regulatory systems evolve and adapt quickly, effectively and to the extent necessary, with the support of the sector. Aside from domestic law and industry self-regulatory codes there are also a variety of technological, educational and other means available to address, avoid and prevent potential problems.

There is no need for any extension of EU legislation and no justification for the extension of the Television Without Frontiers directive to introduce any new controls over the Internet and audiovisual commercial communications, as proposed by the issues papers. The Commission should not bring forward any measures for new statutory controls or new co-regulatory controls.

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