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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Question for Oral Answer B6-0333/2005

pursuant to Rule 108(5) of the Rules of Procedure

by Etelka Barsi-Pataky

on behalf of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

on accelerating the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting

European Parliament resolution on accelerating the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on accelerating the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting (COM(2005)204),
 - having regard to the opinion of the Radio Spectrum Policy Group on spectrum implications of switchover to digital broadcasting of 19 November 2004 (RSPG04-55 Rev.),
 - having regard to the switchover plans of the Member States that were published within the framework of the eEurope action plan,¹
 - having regard to recent studies commissioned by the European Commission on spectrum management in the field of broadcasting and on public policy treatment of digital terrestrial television,²
 - having regard to Directive 2002/21/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 March 2002 on a common regulatory framework for electronic communications networks and services (Framework Directive),
 - having regard to its resolution of 16 September 2002 on an EU action plan for the successful introduction of digital television in Europe (B5-0488/2002, PE 323.002),
 - having regard to Rules 108(5) and 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting will bring benefits at all levels, enabling as it does new and improved broadcasting to be offered, permitting the release of several hundred megahertz of prime spectrum, which could be reallocated for various purposes, and increasing market competition and innovation,
- B. whereas the US plans to terminate terrestrial analogue broadcasting by 1 January 2009, South Korea has announced that it will switch off terrestrial analogue broadcasting by the end of 2010, and Japan by 2011, and whereas it is crucial for the European Union not to lag behind its main competitors,

¹http://europa.eu.int/information_society/policy/ecommm/todays_framework/digital_broadcasting/switchover/national_swo_plans/index_en.htm

² Study on spectrum management in the field of broadcasting – Implications of digital switchover for spectrum management; by Aegis Systems Ltd, Indepen Consulting Ltd and IDATE; June 2005;
Public policy treatment of digital terrestrial television (DTT) in communications markets; by Analysys Limited, Hogan & Hartson and Aleph; 26 August 2004.

http://europa.eu.int/information_society/policy/ecommm/info_centre/documentation/studies_ext_consult/index_en.htm

- C. whereas the Commission proposes the beginning of 2012 as a deadline for completing analogue switch-off in all the EU Member States, but certain Member States have not yet announced their switchover plans,
 - D. whereas the switchover process should be market-driven, but at the same time coordination by broadcasters is needed, and clear public-policy action to coordinate broadcasters is also desirable,
 - E. whereas the Framework Directive enshrines the principle of technological neutrality, but does not preclude taking proportionate steps to promote certain specific services where this is justified,
 - F. whereas the forthcoming Regional Radiocommunication Conference 2006 (RRC06) has been convened to revise the Stockholm 1961 Agreement with a view to harmonising that part of the Agreement which relates to the use of the frequency bands 174-230 MHz and 470-862 MHz in the broadcasting service,
1. Encourages those Member States that have not yet published their switchover plans to announce them by the end of the year, in order to give clear signals and certainty to both consumers and broadcasters; encourages the Member States to keep the time period of simulcasting as short as possible in order to avoid high broadcasting costs, temporary aggravation of capacity scarcity and delay in the switchover;
 2. Calls on the Member States to ensure that policy interventions carried out to secure and accelerate digital switchover are transparent, justified, proportionate and non-discriminatory;
 3. Calls on the European Commission to lay down clearly defined policy objectives to ensure widest possible penetration of the new and innovative services;
 4. Calls on the European Commission to ensure that the research and development is completed at an early stage in the interests of penetration, also, by the new non-broadcasting digital services;
 5. Calls on the European Commission and the Member States to provide for a sufficient level of harmonisation of approaches and regulation regarding the spectrum dividend, particularly in order to be able to satisfy any future demand for pan-European services;
 6. Calls on the European Commission to establish a European Digital Working Party within the existing structure (Communications Committee) with the task of coordinating the regulations, objectives, strategies and timetables of the Member States at Community level. The European Digital Working Party should regularly monitor the performance of the Member States concerning digital transition and arrange workshops where the Member States and other stakeholders can hold discussion panels and exchange views. In addition, the mandate of the European Digital Working Party would be to assist in harmonising approaches to the spectrum dividend in order to ensure the future operation of pan-European services in all Member States;
 7. Calls on the European Commission to act to prevent the formation of vertical bottlenecks

and horizontal monopolies; calls on the Member States to subsidise – in accordance with Community law – digital TV receivers (either set-top boxes or boxes integrated into TV sets) such as the Multimedia Home Platform system, with an open API to inhibit the development of bottlenecks; calls on the Member States to promote and develop interactive services in order to increase the level of digital expertise and the competitiveness of European society, and jointly to promote technical broadcasting measures with a view to filtering content that might impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors;

8. Calls on the European Commission to publish best practice with regard to financing aspects and to provide clear guidance on state aid and competition-law-related issues;
9. Calls on the European Commission and the Member States to declare the high relevance of ensuring ‘equitable access’ to the spectrum dividend within the frame of the RRC06 negotiations, and to agree on a common negotiating position to support the scenario based on the deadline of 2015 for the end of general protection against interference by analogue channels transmitting from outside the European Union, in order to ensure undisturbed digital broadcasting as close as possible to 2012;
10. In order to ensure that the digital divide in society is not exacerbated, calls on the Member States to ensure as soon as possible that there are adequate provisions in place prior to the transition from analogue to digital, including funding and intelligible information, which will mitigate the cost of conversion for those elements in society who will have difficulty in procuring and financing the necessary replacement equipment;
11. Calls on the European Commission to ensure in regulating digital transition that a clear distinction is made between the regulation of transmission of electronic signals and infrastructure and the regulation of content (including audiovisual content), and to ensure, in order to protect pluralism and diversity in the broadcasting field, that the majority, or an appropriate part, of the new broadcasting possibilities and broadcasters do not come under the exclusive control or decisive influence of multinational media undertakings. Regulation of the various additional services transmitted alongside digital broadcasts on the same network should be carried out by making a distinction appropriate to their nature: content services related to broadcasting, other content services and services related to telecommunications;
12. Calls on the European Commission and the Member States to ensure perfect interoperability and technological neutrality in order to provide a level playing field for all operators and to boost European innovation;
13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Member States.