

**Question for written answer E-9935/2010  
to the Commission  
Rule 117  
John Attard-Montalto (S&D)**

Subject: Consumer protection: television licences in Malta

In the 1960s a television licence was imposed on every household in Malta for any apparatus capable of receiving television transmissions in the country. At the time there was only one television broadcasting company, and the licence fee introduced by the government was directly payable to the latter. In 1975 the government took over this broadcasting company and turned it into a national state-owned television company. The licence fee was of course a tax, but no one objected to it because they were being provided with a service. At that time we used to access monochrome transmissions only from this local company. In 1981 the government embarked on a project to introduce colour transmission and colour televisions, and decided to pass the money collected from the licence fees to the national state-owned television broadcasting company.

Today people in Malta have several television broadcasting companies to choose from. They can also choose whether to have cable television, satellite transmission or both. For cable television one pays a monthly fee according to the package and provider one chooses. With satellite television one pays for an access card. As well as paying for the service one also pays a tax – VAT.

Notwithstanding the fact that the consumer has to pay the private service provider in order access its transmissions, the television licence fee has not been abolished. To date it is being paid to the government. When one takes all these circumstances into consideration, one starts to wonder whether it is fair to pay a television licence fee which in reality is paying for nothing. Payment for a television licence has become an anachronism.

Is the Commission in a position to clarify this issue?