

ORAL QUESTION H-0479/04  
for Question Time at the part-session in December 2004  
pursuant to Rule 109 of the Rules of Procedure  
by Luis Herrero-Tejedor  
to the Commission

Subject: The definition of 'public service obligation' and public broadcasting bodies

To date, the Commission has turned a deaf ear to private television operators complaining to it about the unfair competition they have to face.

The unlimited guarantee which the state grants to public television channels often exceeds by a large margin the net cost of the public service obligation. Moreover, many public channels use the subsidies they receive (which in some cases exceeds 92% of their revenue) to offer programming similar to that of the private channel, although this has nothing to do with their fulfilling their public service obligation.

The fact that each Member State is free to establish its own definition of 'public service obligation' means that many of them choose to make this definition a kind of catch-all phrase under which all programmes can be deemed to be of public service.

Despite what is laid down in the Protocol on Member States' public broadcasting systems, does the Commission not believe that for the sake of greater transparency and respect for the right to compete, it would be appropriate to lay down a single definition of 'public service obligation' at Community level? Would the Commission be prepared to put forward a proposal to this effect?

Tabled: 02.12.2004  
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