

ORAL QUESTION O-0053/02

pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure

by Enrique Barón Crespo, Michel Rocard, Barbara O'Toole, Reino Paasilinna, Demetrio Volcic and Karin Junker, on behalf of the PSE Group
to the Commission

Subject: Media concentration

In 1997, five years after the Green Paper on pluralism and media concentration in the internal market (COM(92)0480/final), the Commission decided to postpone indefinitely any proposal for a directive to harmonise national laws on media ownership. This, despite a series of European Parliament resolutions calling for such a directive. Since then, little has happened at European level but there have been significant developments in the field of the media, including:

- a transformation of the technological environment with the advent of the internet, mobile phones, digital TV and the consequent potential for convergence of these technologies,
- a significant loosening of the regulatory framework in the United States as a result of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, allowing even greater horizontal media concentration,
- in the absence of European law, a concentration of many different media in the hands of a small group of large European and international multimedia giants as a result of a series of mergers and acquisitions,
- a change in the political environment as a consequence of fears of the applicant states that they will lose any control over their national media,
- growing problems for the democratic system arising out of the increasing role of the media in politics and the consequent conflicts of interest.

In these circumstances:

- How does the Commission intend to balance the interests of European media businesses with the political imperative of safeguarding media pluralism?
- Does the Commission believe that the time is now ripe for the elaboration of a proposal for a directive on media ownership?
- Does the Commission believe that the Treaties provide an adequate legal base for such legislation? If not, does it intend to bring forward a proposal to the Convention to strengthen it?

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