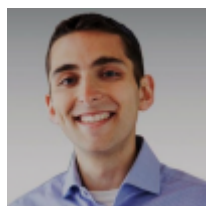# EC Consultation on "Rapidly Converging Audiovisual World" – Extended to 30 September

The European Commission is seeking comments from stakeholders, viewers, and internet users about the changing media landscape. The growth of the internet has made broadcasting, telecommunications, streaming video, journalism, and other media platforms more accessible, but distinctions between them are becoming blurred. This media 'convergence' has complicates the application of separate governance and self-regulatory policies.

The Commission released a Green Paper explaining its stance on media convergence. The Green Paper does not presuppose any further regulation at this time, but it does question whether further EU action is needed in order to promote certain initiatives such as financing of public service content, interoperability of media, market competition, child protection, and other welfare-enhancing initiatives. The primary issues include:

- **"The Rules of the Game"**: Policies to promote competition
- **"Protecting European Values"**: Issues such as protection of children and universal access
- **"Single Market and Standards"**: Union-wide standards for technology, telecommunications, interoperability, etc.
- **"Financing"**: Funding for creative industries and public service content
- **"Openness and Media Pluralism"**: Policies on content filtering, net neutrality, and diversity of content.

There are overlaps between these issues and policy initiatives already underway in the UK. In March 2013, the House of Lords Select Committee on Communications released its report on media convergence, in which it addresses most of these challenges. The Committee is now conducting a separate inquiry on the issue of media plurality. Those interested in submitting to the EC's consultation can find these and other resources on the Communications Committee website.

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport is also examining the media policy framework in light of convergence. In the Government's latest policy paper entitled Connectivity, content and consumers, it reveals its stance on many of these same issues. Some of the Government's proposals include increasing tax breaks for the creative industries, ensuring the prominence of public service broadcasters in Electronic Programme Guides, and encouraging child protection online through parental controls. The policy paper focuses heavily on self-regulation and transparency solutions.

Others have discussed implications of convergence, as well:

- Open Rights Group's Jim Killock warns that convergence may increase providers' incentives to violate principles of net neutrality.
- Claire Milne discusses the importance of making consumer information both transparent and understandable.
- Philip Schlesinger reminds readers that any UK-wide policy on convergence will need to consider the Scottish independence referendum in 2014.
- The EU Kids Online network advocates for standardized content ratings and content classification to assist parents in setting parental controls.

Interested parties can submit their responses to some or all of the Commission's questions by email or post. Further details are available on the consultation website.

August 28th, 2013 | Communications Review, Digital Inclusion, Filtering and Censorship, Internet Governance, Media Literacy, Media Plurality and Ownership, Net Neutrality, Privacy, Public Service Broadcasting/Media | 0 Comments