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**Public Service Broadcasting in an Enlarging Europe:
Contributing to European Policy Objectives**

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Rarely have I struggled so much with a topic on which I have been invited to address an audience.

Had the topic been "the enlarged Europe" (instead of "an enlarging Europe"), then the first part of my difficulties would have been resolved: the "enlarged Europe" would clearly have meant the enlarged European Union. In fact, I suspect - bearing in mind the fact that this Conference is being organized by the EU Presidency - that "Europe" may indeed have been intended to stand for the European Union, with the next candidates and potential candidates for membership already knocking at its door. Only this understanding would, furthermore, justify the use of the word "enlarging", since, otherwise, the term "uniting" or "converging" would have been the only correct one. However, when taken in relation with public service broadcasting, "an enlarging Europe" could also be understood as referring to the Europe of the European Broadcasting Union. Our Europe covers *all* the countries situated in the European Broadcasting Area, from Iceland in the West to Russia in the East, and that has been the case since 1993 already. At the same time, our Europe too is enlarging, since earlier this year our General Assembly advocated a change to the EBU Statutes which would add Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to the existing countries.

On balance, and to let diplomacy win the day, I shall leave it open whether the "enlarging Europe" is that of the European Union or of the European Broadcasting Union.

The second part of my difficulties with the topic which I am due to address today is even more puzzling: public service broadcasters "contributing to European policy objectives"?! Public service broadcasting is characterized by its independence from the State and, indeed, from any other political entity (such as the European Union). Its information programmes have to be impartial, balanced and objective. Contributing to a State's or a supra-national entity's policy objectives would appear totally incompatible with public service broadcasting and may indeed conjure up memories of the not yet forgotten past of state broadcasting in a number of European countries.

So is this already the end of my speech? Of course not.

It would be if "contributing" were understood as implying an obligation, an integral part of the overall public service broadcasting remit, or - perhaps even worse - a self-imposed obligation.

However, if "contributing" is understood as merely referring to the *de facto result* of public broadcasters' impartial and unbiased programming, then much can be said about public broadcasters contributing to European policy objectives.

Assuming that we first agree on what exactly "European policy objectives" are.

The Conference summary refers to the *Lisbon strategy* in this context. By 2010, Europe is to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. "Social cohesion", "European citizenship", "community of values where all the different cultures can flourish" are among the most concrete goals which tend to be associated with the Lisbon strategy.

For a national public service broadcaster, this is all too familiar in the day-to-day realities of programming. In fact, the public service remit of itself quite naturally leads to a major contribution being made, on a continual basis, to European policy objectives.

David Levy will be telling you in concrete terms what this means for one particular broadcaster, the BBC.

Details of the public service programming remit vary, of course, from country to country, partly because of different legislative techniques and habits but also, in particular, owing to the economic, social, cultural, historical and other realities which prevail in each individual country. Even so, there is a core of common features which are universally valid.

"Generally speaking, public service broadcasting must provide programming in the fields of information, entertainment and education/advice for people of all ages and social groups and in any format (such as generalized channels, thematic channels, multimedia services, teletext or other content services, with or without interactivity). It plays an active role in presenting and promoting national culture, whilst also increasing the population's knowledge and understanding of foreign - and especially other European - cultures. It serves as a reference point for all members of the public and is a factor for social cohesion and integration of all individuals, groups and communities. Public service broadcasting is expected to put the ever-increasing number of individual items of information which are available to the public into a meaningful context, to concentrate on their relevance for the citizen and for society, to explain the world in all its variety, richness and diversity, and to assist the population in understanding the new environment. Representing an oasis of credibility, public service broadcasting makes a major contribution to ensuring a truly informed citizenship, which is a precondition for a healthy democracy."

What I have just read out to you is, in fact, a quotation from the introductory note to a Model Law on Public Service Broadcasting which the EBU has been using to assist

with the transformation of state broadcasting into genuine public service broadcasting. In fact, only shortly after the fall of the Berlin wall - 15 years ago! - the EBU adopted the formal policy of assisting the emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe with the introduction and, thereafter, consolidation and strengthening of public service broadcasting. This is a first concrete example of how Europe's public broadcasters contribute, via their professional association, the EBU, to a major European policy objective, as enshrined in the Amsterdam Protocol of 1997, which states in unequivocal terms that "the system of public broadcasting in the Member States is directly related to the democratic, social and cultural needs of each society and to the need to preserve media pluralism".

But let us go back to the question of what, individually, public broadcasters do to contribute to European policy objectives.

To avoid the slightest suspicion that I might not be totally objective, let me begin by quoting what others have said on this:

The European Parliament (1996): "Public sector broadcasting is an aid to informed citizenship, an agency of representative pluralism bringing together different groups in society in a common conversation that shapes public opinion." "Provide unbiased and fully independent information, both in mass coverage and in-depth factual programming, capable of earning the audience's trust and of representing a reference point in the rapidly expanding information market."

The European Commission (1999): "Public service television plays an important role in the Member States of the European Community: this is true with regard to cultural and linguistic diversity, educational programming, in objectively informing public opinion, in generating pluralism and in supplying, on a free-to-air basis, quality programming."

The Council of Europe (1994): "Public service broadcasting, both radio and television, support the values underlying the political, legal and social structures of democratic societies, and in particular respect for human rights, culture and political pluralism." Or again: "Reflect the different philosophical ideas and religious beliefs in society, with the aim of strengthening mutual understanding and tolerance and promoting community relations in pluriethnic and multicultural societies."

Enough quotations! What about hard facts?

Publicly available statistics which compare public broadcasters' programming output with that of commercial broadcasters speak for themselves in demonstrating the eminent role which public broadcasters play in contributing to the Lisbon strategy. I should like to draw your attention here to the EBU contribution to this Conference, entitled "The key role of public service broadcasting in European society in the 21st century Europe." However, statistics alone are not sufficient to present the full picture. One statistical hour of an information or documentary or cultural programme offered by one broadcaster may bear little resemblance to the same statistical hour of programming offered by another broadcaster. Was the programme specifically produced for the national audience, or was the available time-slot simply filled by - generally much

cheaper - bought-in programming which was produced with a foreign audience in mind? Was the programming produced genuinely to inform and enlighten, or was its primary purpose to attract high audiences by giving in to sensationalism or even condoning violence, hatred or other strongly emotional components? Did the broadcaster have enough financial means to produce a programme of a quality level which corresponds to the public's high expectations when it comes to public service programming?

Such questions invite those who regulate public broadcasting, including its funding, to look beyond mere statistics and really to watch those public service programmes which we are considering today.

Let us remember in this context, however, that even the best-quality public service programming cannot fully contribute to achieving European policy goals if, for regulatory/technical reasons, it reaches only part of the intended audience. As more and more - and especially young - people obtain their information and entertainment from other media, or at least from other platforms, public broadcasters must ensure that their programming is available on all platforms, including satellites, the Internet or UMTS, where parts of the public may be turning for information and entertainment. This also includes on-demand services, even if on a payment basis, and any type of interactive programme services. Otherwise, the role of public broadcasters would be increasingly limited to ensuring that retired people benefit from the unique contribution which public service broadcasting can - and does - make to achieving the Lisbon strategy, whereas the rest of the population would be more or less left out.

Here, too, the European Parliament (2004) is certainly a more trustworthy advocate than I am: "To promote cultural diversity in the digital age, it is important that public service broadcasting content reaches audiences through as many distribution networks and systems as possible; it is therefore crucial for public service broadcasters to develop new media services."

Appropriately, and most naturally, this leads us back to the Amsterdam Protocol. The Protocol is not a final achievement in itself. All it does is to clarify that it is for the individual Member States, rather than for the European Union, to define the *remit* of public broadcasting and to provide for its *funding*. Where there is public funding, but the remit is not sufficiently clearly defined, it is the duty of the EU Commission to look into the legitimacy of public funding. Where the remit is clearly defined, and where there are trustworthy control mechanisms to ensure that the public funding is used only for financing the fulfilment of the public broadcasting remit, Brussels is out of the picture. It is therefore entirely in the hands of the Member States to allow Brussels, DG Competition, to spend its entire time on other issues falling within its domain, by ensuring that the remit of their public broadcasters is defined in a clear, positively broad and future-orientated way so that it is part of their mission, in particular, to offer their programming on any electronic platform where the public may be looking for information and entertainment. This concerns both television and radio. An appeal from this forum to all the Member States to heed this advice, and to follow it up - where necessary - with concrete regulatory action, would certainly be a major achievement by this Conference.

Once the remit is defined, there "only" remains the question of providing adequate funding so that the remit can actually be accomplished. Public funding plus - with a few notable exceptions - a certain amount of commercial revenue still appears to be the most appropriate formula for achieving that objective. As long as the overall funding is allocated in accordance with the true needs of the public service broadcaster - as confirmed by an independent advisory board - rather than with an eye to avoid displeasing the public prior to an upcoming election and/or not touching the potential revenue sources of commercial broadcasters, the public will ultimately receive the type of programming which it may legitimately expect from a public service broadcaster.

Let us now go back and see what public broadcasters together, in the framework of the EBU, do as a contribution to European policy objectives.

For instance, to focus only on the European Union, and only on the recent past, there were countless documentaries, features and other programmes aired by European public broadcasters in connection with the EU enlargement, to familiarize their audiences with the reality of the acceding States, or vice versa. But *the* television event in connection with the enlargement was no doubt the EBU co-production organized by ZDF/Germany and TVP/Poland, with active support from the EU Commission, which marked the night of 30 April 2004. Together, a number of EBU Members have now embarked on co-producing a quiz series (called *Panorama Europe*) which will feature aerial views of 60 different sites from within the 25 Member States, with national audiences invited to identify the sites. This is yet another, albeit simplified, way of raising European citizens' interest in other European countries and increasing awareness of Europe's rich cultural diversity.

Although national or even regional by nature, public broadcasting obviously devotes a considerable amount of time to European or, indeed, worldwide affairs. Those of you who watch, or listen to, public service broadcasting will immediately remember some of the - countless - programmes from public service broadcasting dealing with European and, especially, EU affairs, whether it be day-to-day business in Brussels, the enlargement of the European Union, elections to the European Parliament, the appointment of the new Commission or whatever. In fact, most of the EBU Members from the 25 EU countries have their own permanent correspondents in Brussels for that purpose. However, from a very early stage onwards, Europe's public broadcasters understood and appreciated the advantage of collaborating in this field too, to the immediate benefit of their national audiences. Thus, the EBU's daily news exchanges include European items on an almost daily basis, for free use by all public broadcasters throughout the 52 countries situated in the European Broadcasting Area. Incidentally, the average number of news items exchanged in this way amounts to 30'000 per year.

In the context of cooperation in the programme area, I must, of course, mention two pan-European programme services with which you are familiar:

Euronews, operated by a Consortium of 19 EBU Members, and Eurosport, operated by a Consortium of 25 EBU Members.

I hardly need to introduce these multi-lingual channels to you, but I should like to draw your attention to the distinct public service remit of Eurosport. The channel covers virtually all sports, including all the so-called minority ones, rather than concentrating

on those sports which generate high audiences, which means football and Formula 1. Euronews is much appreciated - not least in a country such as Russia - for its specific *European* focus on news and current affairs.

Numerous daily reports by public broadcasters' correspondents in Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg are relayed for live transmission in their respective countries via the Eurovision network operated by the EBU. Few people may know that the same network allowed, for instance, each and every European public broadcaster's transmission of the Olympic Games, the Tour de France or the European Football Championship to go out live, with national commentary from the venue, together with live interspersed interviews or other comments from the venue as well. Hardly anyone will know that all this is possible thanks to a very substantial investment by Europe's public service broadcasters to ensure that whatever happens anywhere in Europe (and, indeed, in most parts of the world) can be made available for instant broadcasting in any country where the public broadcaster wishes to include a report on that event in its news or other programming. When Bayern Munich plays in Turkey or in the Ukraine, the EBU network ensures that the German audience can watch the match live. The same evening, many other matches are taking place, and in each case the national audience wishes to follow live how its team fares abroad. Thanks to the Eurovision network, each national audience will be satisfied. Or take the night of the European elections. Thanks to the Eurovision network, no fewer than 191 unilateral transmissions originating from Brussels and then broadcast by the EBU Members in the 25 Member States (but also in other countries) were relayed via the Eurovision network to their individual destinations. And who could ever forget the historic night of 30 April 2004?! The ZDF-TVP co-production which I mentioned earlier and which was relayed in 29 countries; the countless contributions from the capitals of the new Member States, from Brussels, from Dublin, but also from numerous other cities; the special programmes which public broadcasters devoted to the enlargement of the European Union and which were interspersed with numerous (live) pictures from abroad, etc.

Again, all of that thanks to the Eurovision network which, in fact, exceeded all traffic records on that night. These few examples highlight the daily reality of Europe's public service broadcasters' jointly-operated network functioning to the ultimate benefit of the European citizen. This little-known activity by Europe's public broadcasters is just another example of how public broadcasters contribute actively to the achievement of European policy objectives.

I imagine that by now, when I have outlined the relevant joint activities of EBU Members in the field of television and the end of my speech may therefore seem near, at least some of you may begin to wonder whether public service *radio* has either simply been forgotten or does not contribute significantly to European policy objectives. Let me reassure you that being mentioned at the end by no way implies a value judgement. To be diplomatic, let me simply remark that, generally speaking, public radio is as important as public television when it comes to contributing to European policy objectives. If it is true that radio tends to be forgotten in speeches dealing with public service broadcasting, the vast number of faithful radio listeners themselves are all too well aware of public radio's countless contributions to European policy objectives.

In fact, European public radio continues to have high social and cultural impact and is gathering momentum as a unique tool for intercultural dialogue, mutual knowledge and understanding. According to EBU audience research data, at present two-thirds of Europeans listen to public radio channels via different platforms, including digital satellite, for two and a half hours a day.

A telling example is the European Radio Culture day, a biennial event organized by the EBU and Prix Europa under the auspices of the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

The 2003 edition of the event was a great success with 94 public channels from Reykjavik to Athens, from Lisbon to Moscow - all in all 40 countries, broadcasting their own programmes devoted to culture and building a bridge of knowledge, understanding and spiritual richness all over the continent to an audience of 300 million.

The EBU Euroradio concert seasons with the best selection of music from all genres is an established brand name for making audiences aware of the immense cultural diversity in the continent and well beyond it. In 2003 alone the offer of concerts, most of them broadcast live via the satellite, totalled 2,100.

In conclusion, to allow public broadcasters, both television and radio, to continue to contribute actively to the achievement of European policy objectives, in the most efficient and up-to-date manner, Member States must ensure that there is a clear future-oriented public broadcasting remit, accompanied by a solid funding mechanism which allows public broadcasters to fulfil their remit in every respect, not least with regard to what politicians themselves expect when speaking of public broadcasters' contribution to European policy objectives.
