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Transcript of the speech of Commissioner Michel Barnier presented at the EBU event "Modern Copyright for Digital Media"

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Good morning to everybody, and may I first of all apologize for not being with you physically this morning. Every Wednesday the European Commission meets under the President, José Manuel Barroso, and that explains my absence. Nonetheless, I shall be paying very close attention to your discussions and conclusions because throughout these days you are going to be working on issues which concern us, and concern me, and which are at the heart of the digital agenda proposed by the President of the European Commission.

Ladies and gentlemen, seeking the most effective way of managing copyright has always been highly complicated. That is naturally even more the case in the Internet era. As all the geographical barriers fall and content becomes non-material, we need to strike the right balance - allow everyone to have access to creative works and culture but also guarantee - and this I strongly believe in - the fairest and most equitable possible remuneration for the work of creators.

Every creation is the fruit of hard work, and I feel that I should reiterate what I told the European Parliament during my hearing: creative effort must be remunerated. Our inventiveness has always been the source of European excellence. And in the current worldwide competition, in the economic war, we need to keep that advantage, that added value related to creativity and innovation. We cannot take the risk of allowing it to dry up. So I am beginning my new post as a European Commissioner with a very clear ambition: to encourage innovation while protecting creativity through equitable remuneration and ensuring that works of all kinds are disseminated to as many citizens and consumers as possible through all available media.

I am, ladies and gentlemen, fully aware that at present we have not yet found the balance, and that it will be difficult to find. In our hyper-media societies, despite the fact that the offer available is now immense, public service broadcasters continue to play a unique, inestimable role. That has been my view for quite some time, and I have not forgotten the high-quality relationship that I had, many years ago,

with Jean-Claude Killy, the Olympic Games in Albertville and, in that capacity, I worked very closely and very constructively with the public service broadcasters of Europe.

The Internet has democratized in spectacular fashion the dissemination of information and culture. New social uses are developing which are overturning a landscape which was very familiar to us until just recently. And yet, the public service audiovisual sector maintains an essential role - offering the great majority of people access to the diversified offer which I mentioned a few moments ago, an offer in which the notion of citizenship is central and an offer of quality. It is quite logical that this mission should reinvent itself by making use of the new potential offered by the digital revolution. We need only think of such new services as catch-up TV, podcasts and video-on-demand. What is certain is that all this new technology, all these new uses, will enable public service broadcasters to reach a new, even wider public. Isn't that, after all, the very essence of their mission, of your mission? Technology will increase even further broadcasting's role as a means of conveying culture and education and, personally, I am delighted.

Ladies and gentlemen, copyright naturally plays a key role in the promotion of culture, and remains a pre-condition for creation. New technology is resulting in such a revolution in our practices that they necessitate, I think, renovation and reform in the way copyright is currently managed. That is why our method of remunerating authors will be one of the main components of the reform programme which I plan to propose in conjunction with the European Commission. In its Communication on Copyright in the Knowledge Economy of last October the Commission announced an ambitious programme to accompany the emergence of European digital libraries. Now we need to take concrete action, and that is indeed my intention.

What will be the basis of that concrete action? Firstly, we need to ensure that so-called "orphan works", whose owners are unknown, can be made available on the Internet. That is the prerequisite for enabling the library collections to be made as accessible as possible online for the public at large. Next, I wish to propose new rules making it far easier to place Out-of-Print works online. The administrative services are working on a proposal regarding orphan works which I hope to be able to present by the Autumn. Last year the Commission also published a reflection document on creative content in a single European market. One of the priorities which we identified concerned adapting the regulatory framework which governs copyright so that a larger number of protected works can be exploited online legally. I therefore naturally wish to put on the table, rapidly, an initiative to improve the management and transparency of the collecting societies.

The societies can play a decisive role, I am certain, in encouraging and assisting with works being made available as part of new digital offers.

Ladies and gentlemen, an efficient, modern legal framework should make it possible to monitor the activities of the rights management societies. This will make collective management more attractive for the digital era, and I hope that the initiative will be ready by the end of this year, after all the necessary consultations. In this area too I wish to practise what is, today, the rule: listen to and consult with parliamentarians, professional circles and associations before putting the right proposal on the table. I hope that in this dialogue and consultation, as well as in the action itself, you will be able to work with us and offer us your support, in keeping with your position, in carrying out such action, which is ambitious and difficult but necessary. Indeed, I believe that it is essential for our action to succeed so that in the digital revolution everyone is a winner, for the widest possible good of the largest possible number. I conclude this brief presentation by reiterating what I mentioned a few moments ago: I count on you, on you in particular, to help us in this joint work of general interest because your experience and expertise are absolutely essential. And that is also why I shall be, through my colleagues who are with you today, very attentive to your thoughts and to the conclusions resulting from your work. I wish you a very successful day's work.