



Making Europe's online content market more competitive: Commission opens public consultation

A public consultation on ways to stimulate the growth of a true EU single market for online digital content, such as films, music and games, was launched by the European Commission today. The Commission intends to encourage the development of innovative business models and to promote the cross-border delivery of diverse online content services. It is also keen to ascertain how European technologies and devices can be successful in the creative online content markets. Input to this consultation will help shape a Commission Communication on Content Online, due to be adopted at the end of the year. The deadline for replies is 13 October 2006.

“Supplying content on line, such as films, music and games, not only helps to make Europe’s culture more accessible, but will also be a tremendous opportunity for Europe’s content industry to expand its own markets”, noted Information Society and Media Commissioner Viviane Reding. “Easy access to, and secure distribution of, online content is a crucial challenge. I expect input to today’s consultation to identify clearly any remaining obstacles to a competitive, pan-European online content industry which the EU needs to tackle. Only a cross-border market for online content, in which authors, artists and creators are able to reap a fair reward for their talent and skills, will enable Europe’s content sector to compete with other continents.”

The public consultation “Content Online in Europe’s Single Market” launched by the Commission today intends to pave the way for a true European single market for online content delivery. Online content can play a crucial role for the growth of Europe’s sector for information and communication technologies (ICT) and media. Western European online content-sharing frameworks and markets are expected to triple by 2008 (with the user/creator part growing tenfold). These developments are expected to multiply across the sector, already accounting for 8% of EU GDP today.

Questions asked in the Commission’s content online consultation include: Which economic and regulatory barriers do online content services face in Europe’s single market? How does the competitiveness of Europe’s online content industry compare to that of other world regions? Would creative businesses benefit from Europe-wide or multi-territory licensing and clearance? Is progress needed as regards interoperability of digital rights management (DRM) systems in Europe? The consultation started today follows earlier Commission initiatives to develop a European single market for the delivery of online music services (see [IP/05/1261](#)).

The Commission launches its consultation on content online against the background of the rapid convergence of audiovisual media, broadband networks and electronic devices. The availability and take-up of high-speed "broadband" connections is making it easier for consumers not only to access a wider range of creative digital content than would have been imaginable ten years ago, but also to create content themselves. At the same time, broadband's ability to handle vast quantities of data enables European companies to offer new content and services and to create additional markets.

The creation of an open and competitive single market for online content is one of the key aims of the EU's i2010 initiative – a European Information Society for growth and jobs, started by the Commission on 1 June 2005 (see [IP/05/643](#)). In July 2005, industry leaders from the ICT and media sector had agreed to work with the Commission on an "Agenda for Unlocking Europe's Digital Economy", in which the promotion of media content markets through effective rights protection, licensing arrangements and encouraging legitimate use of content was given priority (see [IP/05/900](#)). A first concrete example of how challenges for Europe's online content industry can be tackled is the European Charter for the Development and the Take-up of Film Online, initiated in May 2005 by Commissioner Reding and endorsed by film makers and business leaders on 23 May 2006, at the Europe Day of the 59th Cannes Film Festival (see [IP/06/672](#)).

The content online consultation launched today also aims to identify stakeholder views on self-regulatory initiatives such as the Film Online Charter, to assess whether the initiative could be used as a model for similar initiatives in other online content sectors, and to evaluate whether regulatory measures at EU level are required to ensure the completion of a true EU market for online content without borders.

The deadline for replies to the content online consultation – which is open to industry, in particular content and internet service providers, consumer organisations, in particular from the "Internet community", regulators and all interested parties – is 13 October 2006.

Further information on the public consultation and the consultation document can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/avpolicy/other_actions/content_online/index_en.htm