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« Content Online » Hearing – 11 October 2006 – Statement of the Creative and Media Business Alliance (CMBA)

Thank you Chairman,

I would like to say a few words on behalf of the “Creative and Media Business Alliance” – or CMBA – whose members have an obvious and direct interest in the European Commission’s “Content Online” public consultation.

The CMBA gathers some of Europe’s top media and creative businesses and industry associations. Together we invest in, produce and disseminate a wide array of content that educates, informs and entertains Europe’s citizens. Our membership spans the book, newspaper and magazine publishing, database, portal and web publishers, music companies, broadcasters and film producers as well as advertisers – all of which help to make possible the creation and distribution of content (such as songs, music, news articles, stories, poems, films, shows, etc.) on the basis of commercially sustainable business models.

To put it simply and clearly, it is the creative content that I just enumerated that people are looking for when they are connecting to the Internet, activating their broadband connection, switching on their 3G mobile phone or choosing a channel on their digital TV service. This creative media content lies thus at the heart of the exciting “Content Online” marketplace we should all want to see developing and thriving. Without it, the Information Society would be nothing more than empty pipes and boxes.

The CMBA has prepared a detailed written response to the Commission’s Questionnaire, which we are about to send in. Let me here give you a quick overview of the ideas and suggestions contained in our submission. We believe these ideas and suggestions should be the basis for the specific actions that need to be taken at the EU level to put in place the right conditions for a healthy “Content Online” environment to develop and flourish. And this for the benefit of consumers,

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network users and network providers, all gathered together in a “win-win” proposition.

The CMBA notably calls for:

- *A strengthening of network users’ interests in the context of the review of the EU’s “Telecom Package”. This by introducing regulatory provisions to ensure that network operators/providers contribute actively and responsibly to a secure and healthy “Content Online” environment.*
- *Continued encouragement for the migration to legitimate content delivery services, through robust inter-industry codes of conduct and/or concrete legislation.*
- *A light-touch regulatory approach to the e-commerce environment, notably with regard to taxation levels (VAT). Indeed, today the EU VAT regime discriminates against electronic products and impacts negatively on the launch of new creative services online.*
- *More room for self-regulatory arrangements that are often the most efficient way, especially in the online world, to meet public policy objectives.*
- *A strong support for industry-led standardisation efforts aimed at fostering Platform, DRM and Content Interoperability (for example within the Digital Video Broadcasting Project).*
- *The establishment of stronger deterrence against IP theft and cyber-criminality in general, notably by facilitating enforcement efforts.*
- *The further development of awareness-raising initiatives to inform citizens about the value of intangible products and services. People who would never steal in a shop should understand the clear damage caused by online theft.*
- *Finally, before seeking further harmonization of single market rules, the Commission needs to focus on better enforcement and implementation of regulations already currently in place.*

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