

Thursday 10 June 2021

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Future EU financing of the radio network Euranet Plus

European Parliament resolution of 10 June 2021 on the future EU financing of the radio network Euranet Plus (2021/2708(RSP))

(2022/C 67/19)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
 - having regard to Article 5(3) of the Treaty on European Union and Protocol No 2 to the Treaties on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality,
 - having regard to Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
 - having regard to the Commission decision of 18 March 2021 on the financing of multimedia actions and the adoption of the work programme for 2021, including the annex thereto,
 - having regard to the question to the Commission on the future EU financing of the radio network Euranet Plus (O-000036/2021 — B9-0023/2021),
 - having regard to Rules 136(5) and 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on Culture and Education,
- A. whereas radio has proven to be a crucial medium for communicating with people about EU affairs;
- B. whereas in larger and more populous Member States, regional and local radio stations, courtesy of their very high market penetration, often offer a privileged window on EU-related content for a considerable listenership and make an effective contribution to the preservation of minority languages;
- C. whereas while radio can assert itself as a key medium in a largely digitalised media landscape, the digitalisation of sound broadcasting in the EU is a long-term process that requires radio stations and networks to draw up transition plans, spread the required investments and cushion the full economic impact of this shift;
- D. whereas, founded in 2007, Euranet Plus is a unique network of radio stations in the EU that reports on events in Europe from a transnational perspective; whereas since the network's establishment, its operational activities have mainly been financed with EU funding; whereas Euranet Plus is currently composed of 13 leading public and private broadcasters in 13 Member States, which together reach a cumulative total of more than 15 million listeners every day⁽¹⁾, and offers a unique range of high-quality production, broadcasting and editorial services to its members, thereby meeting the requirements of Article 195 of the Financial Regulation⁽²⁾ in terms of the specific characteristics of activities that require a particular type of body;
- E. whereas the current grant agreement with Euranet Plus — worth EUR 2,16 million per year — is set to expire on 31 December 2021;
- F. whereas the European Parliament was notified of the Commission's decision on the future financing model for multimedia actions in a letter from Commissioner Breton on 18 January 2021, which stated that the grant agreement with Euranet Plus would not be renewed and would be replaced by a competitive annual call for proposals to be launched in 2021;

⁽¹⁾ Official website of the Euranet Plus Network, 'Our Network'.

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1).

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- G. whereas the Commission did not engage in a strategic dialogue with Euranet Plus, as expressly recommended in a recent audit, before taking its decision on the future financing of radio broadcasting;
- H. whereas the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) has repeatedly asked the Commission to be included in the decision-making process for multimedia actions, has conveyed to the Commission its strong conviction that the planned approach was unfair on Euranet Plus which, as a pan-European radio network with a mission of public service, deserves to be treated as a unique partner for promoting integration and media diversity in the EU, and has expressed, both orally and in written form, its fundamental disagreement with the rapid change planned by the Commission for EU funding for radio broadcasting, which could disrupt the continuity of service;
- I. whereas on 18 March 2021, the Commission went ahead as planned with the adoption of the decision on the financing of multimedia actions and the adoption of the work programme for 2021; whereas the Commission has made it clear through multiple exchanges of views with staff and Commissioners that it intends to uphold its decision regarding future EU funding for Euranet Plus — in total disregard for Parliament's political will on this matter;
- J. whereas a funding model based on annual open calls for proposals with a very limited duration is not financially sustainable; whereas the fact that a call will be launched this year, with no transitional measures, is unfair on Euranet Plus, a longstanding, trusted partner, makes it impossible for Euranet to draw up a long-term development plan for making the digital shift and investing in further improvements to its products and services, and is likely to lead to the liquidation of the organisation and the redundancy of its staff in early 2022;
1. Urges the Commission to acknowledge the unique nature of Euranet Plus as an independent radio network that successfully bridges the information gap between the EU and its citizens by strengthening their understanding of and promoting debate on all fields of EU policymaking; underlines that Euranet Plus combines production and broadcasting capacities in providing high-quality editorial services for its affiliated radio stations and the agency itself, which plans co-productions, promotes exchanges and produces pan-European, tailor-made and on-demand formats for its members; concludes that Euranet Plus thus represents a unique gateway for its considerable membership of public and private broadcasters which, with content in 12 official EU languages, reach more than 15 million listeners every day who may otherwise not engage with EU-related issues;
 2. Calls for Euranet Plus's current core funding to be renewed in the form of a transitional grant agreement for at least two years to enable it to develop a long-term strategic plan to develop the network further by the end of 2027, with a view to expanding its membership and geographic and linguistic coverage, preparing for the digital shift, and investing in further improvements to its products and services; requests that the Commission's Directorates-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT) and Budget (DG BUDG) form an interinstitutional working group with Euranet Plus and the CULT Committee in order to find the appropriate technical solutions to implement a multiannual operational framework; underlines that such transitional measures will allow the organisation to equip itself for a competitive, multiannual process that could start in 2024; emphasises that this approach will create the most added value in terms of sustainability, efficiency and a sound use of EU public funding, as opposed to short-term procedures that not only force beneficiaries to live a hand-to-mouth existence but are also more costly in administrative terms;
 3. Requests that the Commission urgently revise its decision of 18 March 2021 to ensure that the EUR 2,2 million earmarked for financing activities in radio broadcasting in 2022 in point 2 of the annex thereto is not allocated through an open call, but given directly to Euranet Plus, based on the fact that the organisation continues to meet the requirements of Article 195 of the Financial Regulation;
 4. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.
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