

**European Commission reaffirms role of public service broadcasting**  
**ZDF Director-General: "Putting the interests of users first"**

The Director-General of ZDF, Markus Schächter, welcomed the Communication on the financing of broadcasting issued by the European Commission on Thursday: "I am pleased that the Commission has recognised the special role played by public service broadcasting with regard to social, cultural and democratic life. Crucially, the Commission has confirmed the importance of the new telemedia services, which are indispensable for performing this role appropriately in today's world. In taking this stance, the Commission is putting the interests and needs of users first."

The European Commission has made clear in its Communication on the financing of public broadcasters that public service broadcasters cannot be forced back into a niche existence. It argues that technology neutrality and editorial independence are foundations for the further development of public service broadcasting in the Digital Age.

The centrepiece of the new Communication is the question of adapting to a new media landscape. With the advance of digitalisation, this landscape has seen major changes since the previous broadcasting Communication from 2001. The Communication is grounded on the principles governing the financing of public service broadcasting that have been laid down in EU law – most importantly in an explanatory protocol to the Amsterdam Treaty. Accordingly, the Member States may in principle determine at their own discretion the public service mission and the funding of this mission, taking into account their own priorities, history and needs.

Schächter appealed to Brussels to keep future EU state aid policy consistent with the framework of what is known as the 'Refined Economic Approach'. This approach recognises that a market failure occurs in the field of free-to-air television and in the case of ad-sponsored online services. Market failure an important justification for state aid, as the Commission's own State Aid Action Plan argues. In those areas where, due to specific economic structures, competition fails, state intervention does not *per se* represent a competitive distortion.

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ZDF Press Office