Question for written answer E-015661/2015
to the Commission
Rule 130
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Subject: State influence over the media market in Hungary

The Additional Protocol to the Amsterdam Treaty stipulates that 'the provisions of the Treaty are without prejudice to the Member States' competence to provide for the funding of public service broadcasting', subject to the requirement of proportionality.

State subsidies for Hungarian public service media amount to some HUF 260 million per annum, which is a very substantial sum on the Hungarian market. The public service media use this funding not only to perform their cultural, educational and information tasks but also for example to operate a 24-hour sports channel, which mostly covers commercial sports events, thus seriously distorting the market.

In addition, the measurement of the public service interest – which should be transparent where public funds are used – does not comply with European rules, according to experts, as the media service-provider supervises itself and there are no external, independent bodies involved, while the law also lacks any correction mechanism.

A suspicion of State influence over the media market also arises from another point of view. The second largest commercial television station, TV2, has been bought by an investment group whose head, Andy Vajna, is a government commissioner. According to press reports which have not yet been refuted, a substantial part of the capital required for the purchase was supplied by Eximbank, which is 100% State-owned. If this is true, it also raises the suspicion that the State has secretly acquired property in this case.

– Will the Commission investigate whether the practices adhered to in Hungary with regard to subsidies for public-service broadcasting are legal?

– Will the Commission inquire into the legality of the sale of TV2 under European law?