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Dear Mr de Wit, Dear Mr Sanchez,

Vice-President Kroes has asked me to respond to your letter of 19 December in which you express your concerns on the impact on local and community radio of the adoption of a single standard for digital radio.

Before addressing more specifically the issues mentioned in your letter, I would like to remind you that the European Union does not currently have a common policy on radio broadcasting. Member States and the Commission have considered up to now that the cross-border element in radio transmission is insufficient in itself to justify the establishment of a fully-fledged EU radio policy. As a consequence, Member States take responsibility for radio policy under the subsidiarity principle. The Commission however fully recognises the requirements of radio in various EU policies affecting radio broadcasting, notably spectrum policy where specific provisions are foreseen to accommodate radio services.

We believe that a number of conclusions can be drawn from the regular contacts that the Commission services have with the stakeholders involved in radio services. First, there seems to be a consensus that the future of radio distribution will be multi-platform, including internet distribution which offers an alternative in a number of situations. Second, terrestrial distribution is still the sole platform for truly mobile reception, in particular in cars. In this context, a number of terrestrial radio standards are already in use across Member States for distributing national and regional services, i.e. the DAB family of standards. There is also the DRM family conceived as a separate, but complementary development. We note that building multiple standards into radio receiver chips is becoming a reality and that software implementation of radio receiver standards is evolving into a mass-market phenomenon. Public policy has to remain both neutral in terms of technological solutions and sufficiently flexible to adapt to future evolutions.

If a clear case could be made for a European co-ordinating role, the Commission would be willing to reconsider its approach. Under such circumstances, the Commission would initiate cooperation with Member States to define the appropriate way forward. So far however, interactions with radio stakeholders have not yielded any overriding justification for EU co-ordination of digital radio. Member States have not so far expressed a need for Commission co-ordination in this policy area.

Yours sincerely

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