

**UK GOVERNMENT REPORT ON IPR AND DIGITAL RIGHTS IN LINE
WITH PUBLISHERS’
‘BIG IDEA’ BEING LAUNCHED AT THE
EU’S DIGITAL ASSEMBLY ON 17 JUNE**

The European Publishers Council (EPC), representing 29 leaders in the newspaper, magazine, book, journal, internet, online database, radio and TV sectors in Europe, has welcomed the UK Government’s Hargreaves review of Intellectual Property Rights which puts copyright and IP rights at the heart of the government’s strategy for innovation and growth. Adapting the legal framework will be key alongside creative ways of licensing content including through the creation of a digital rights exchange, a one-stop shop for rights clearance for the use of online content.

The EPC is demonstrating its own rights expressions and clearing project at the EU’s Digital Assembly in Brussels on June 17 - an idea selected by Commissioner Neelie Kroes and her department as one of just seven “Big Ideas” to be progressed to help grow the digital economy. The EPC’s idea, cited in the Hargreaves Report, centres on standardising rights expressions and automating transactions to facilitate a fully functioning “copyright-aware” internet.

The EPC welcomes the fact that the Hargreaves Review is not advocating that the Government should itself create this Digital Copyright Exchange but rather to bring together all relevant interests and find ways to overcome divergences of interest, including using Government money to fund some of the development. The aim is to establish a network of interoperable databases to provide a common platform for licensing transactions.

Angela Mills Wade, EPC’s Executive Director said: “We support the recommendation that Government has a role in sponsoring the steps needed for the market to establish itself. What is crucial is something that can be easily adopted by other countries, that will scale elegantly and that can be defined and developed by the market, not by regulators. A 21st century workable standards infrastructure is the essential first step to fulfilling the report’s claim of making “the UK the best place in the world to do business in digital content”.”

However, the report is clear that industry is the key to providing the solution and the EPC’s “Big Idea” is cited along with another EPC-led online copyright project, ACAP,¹ as work already being progressed to address online copyright issues.

Angela Mills Wade said: The real challenge, and the real solution, lies in harnessing technology to streamline rights clearance. Creating this infrastructure - or, rather, linking together and making interoperable what already largely exists (Creative Commons, ACAP, ONIX, ARROW, for example) - does not require a change in the law, it requires 21st century tools to ensure that existing copyright law works. We publishers are working on developing possible solutions in this area to make it easy to “click, find, use and pay if necessary” for the content desired. We are delighted to see that the UK Government is on a similar track.”

¹ Automated Content Access Protocol (ACAP) www.the-acap.org

UK Prime Minister David Cameron announced this IPR review earlier this year but sparked fears amongst content owners when he appeared to be in the thrall of Google, saying that Google told him they could never have launched in the UK because of the UK's copyright regime.

Regarding proposals for new exceptions to copyright Angela Mills Wade cautioned: "Exceptions should always be an instrument of last resort and strictly limited in order that they do not undermine the commercial exploitation of copyright material. Harnessing technology to innovate in licensing should be the preferred route and exceptions introduced while markets are still developing risk limiting, rather than expanding, opportunity and the public good. In a well functioning technological environment we should need fewer, not more, exceptions."

Angela Mills Wade continued: "The report acknowledges the importance of copyright in fuelling – not hindering - a content-rich digital economy. This digital rights exchange idea has the potential to benefit everyone in the copyright chain – creators, producers and distributors along with citizens and all consumers of digital content and services. We call on the Government to move this proposal forward quickly."

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Note to Editors:

EPC Digital Assembly Project:

"The Answer to the Machine is in the Machine"

Launch: 17 June, Autoworld, Brussels

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/digital-agenda/daa/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/events/cf/dae1009/item-display.cfm?id=5256

Full details: <http://www.epceurope.org>; <http://www.epceurope.org/factsheets/the-answer-to-the-machine-is-in-the-machine-faqs.shtml>

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