Alison Harcourt

**Media Plurality: What Can the European Union Do?**

This paper provides insight into the approach of the European Union institutions to media plurality. It includes analysis of the 2011 European Parliament’s Resolution on the media law in Hungary, the subsequent 2013 report of the High Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism and the European Commission’s response. It considers the latter’s proposals in light of the current market environment and the proposals of other stakeholders and advocacy groups such as the 2013 European Initiative for Media Pluralism, OSI and InfoAccess. The European Union institutions have long been pressured by interest groups and the European Parliament (EP) to take action on threats to media pluralism and freedom at national levels (Harcourt, 1996, 2005; 2009). Recent activity includes the 2013 European Initiative for Media Pluralism, wherein over 100 civil society groups, called upon the EU for “legislative actions to stop big media and protect media pluralism in Europe”. The paper considers EU proposals in light of the existing market environment, proposals of other stakeholders (most notably the OSI), and constraints to EU action due to lack of Treaty basis for initiatives in this field. It concludes that the EU is ever reliant on company law instruments and soft measures such as funding initiatives due to a weak Treaty basis for a Directive and Member State opposition to action flanked by the pressures of an increasing globalised communications market.