

Dr Molly Scott Cato
Green MEP for South West England and Gibraltar
European Parliament, Rue Wiertz
1047 Brussels, Belgium

Commissioner for Competition, Margrethe Vestager
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200,
1049 Brussels, Belgium

6th January 2017

Re: Concentration of media ownership, takeover of Sky by 21st Century Fox

Dear Commissioner Vestager

We are writing to request that you intervene to investigate the takeover of Sky by 21st Century Fox.

We observe that media ownership is already extremely concentrated both in Europe and globally and it is our belief that this is threatening our democratic values. According to the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), in 2014, the top five private companies (Liberty, BSkyB, RTL, Mediaset, and Canal+) generated the same revenue (€33 billion) as the fifty-seven members of the EBU.¹

Sky is already the largest broadcaster in terms of revenue and 21st Century Fox already owns 39.1% of Sky plc (previously BSkyB).² Sky also provides the vast majority of news bulletins to local radio stations and Murdoch's NewsCorp also owns one-third of Weekly (Daily plus Sunday) newspaper circulation in the UK.³

Britain has one of the most concentrated media environments in the world, with 3 companies in control of 71% of national newspaper circulation and 5 companies in command of 81% of local newspaper titles.

Although Sky TV broadcasts mainly in English, it is, in reality, a global station and many citizens across the European Union receive much of their information from this source. Media pluralism is an essential underpinning of a free society and a healthy democracy and we find considerable public interest concerns in this proposed takeover.

We are aware that in 2011 when a similar bid was made by Newscorp, the Commission decided that it was not a threat to European competition in the media industry. Since then we have seen growing concentration of media ownership including the takeover by Sky of its sister operations in Germany and Italy which the Commission thought 'unlikely'.⁴

We would hope and expect that five years on you would give this takeover bid formal consideration and consider whether it is likely to enhance or weaken competition in the media industry and whether it is likely to enhance or undermine the strength of EU democracy.

Yours sincerely,

Molly Scott Cato MEP

Keith Taylor MEP

Jean Lambert MEP

¹ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourbeeb/des-freedman/growing-gap-between-private-and-public-in-european-broadcasting>

² Media Reform Coalition, Who Owns the UK Media: http://www.mediareform.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Who_owns_the_UK_media-report_plus_appendix1.pdf

³ http://www.mediareform.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Who_owns_the_UK_media-report_plus_appendix1.pdf

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/dec/09/the-sky-takeover-deal-all-you-need-to-know>