

## **ECREA SECTION REPORT 2007-8.**

### **Communications Law and Policy**

In 2006 the Communication Law and Policy section of ECREA was launched, on the initiative of its current chair Katharine Sarikakis. It seeks to provide a forum for the debate and analysis of past and current policy directions in the field of media and communication. Its aim is twofold. First, to provide a forum for academic debate and research collaboration on the broadly defined field of communication law and policy, including questions of media, information, telecoms, and cultural policy. Second, to provide informed and critical policy analysis and recommendations; to collaborate with policy makers and NGOs and civil society; and to provide opinions on most important themes, while drawing attention to others. The section chair is Katharine Sarikakis, Senior Lecturer in Communications Policy and Director of the Centre for International Communications Research at the Institute of Communications Studies, the University of Leeds, UK. The section has two vice chairs: Caroline Pauwels, Professor of Communication and Director of the centre for Studies of Media, Information and Telecommunication (SMIT) at the Free University of Brussels; and Peter Humphreys, Professor of Politics at the University of Manchester.

- On 8-9 May, a workshop on the theme of “Globalization, Regulatory Competition and Audiovisual Regulation”, was held at the University of Manchester involving a number of ECREA CLP section members.
- In May 2007, section member Peter Humphreys (vice chair) presented a paper ‘Digital Convergence, European Competition Policy, and the Future of Public Service Broadcasting. The UK and German Cases’ in the session on International Convergence Policies of the Communications Law and Policy Division at the 58th Annual Conference of the International Communications Association, Montreal, 22-26th May. In October 2008 Peter Humphreys was elected vice chair of the ICA’s Communication Law and Policy Division for 2009-2010.
- During 2008, a book edited by three members, with contributions from a number of others, was accepted for publication in the ECREA book series, namely: Andrea Czepek, Melanie Hellwig & Eva Nowak (eds), Press Freedom and Pluralism in Europe: Concepts and Conditions, Bristol UK/Chicago USA: Intellect. The book is currently in press.
- The Section was very well represented at the November 2008 ECREA conference in Barcelona. There were eight panels, with a total of 47 papers, these amounting to just over half the number of abstract proposals received and evaluated. The panel sessions covered both general questions such as the changing nature of communications policy and much more specific policy issues such as media concentration, the challenges facing public service broadcasting and other cultural policies, and EU media policies. All the sessions were very well attended, with three sessions filling the room with over 50 attendees, and none attracting fewer than 30.

The Section Business meeting at the Barcelona conference was attended by 25 members. An important agenda item was election of the Section Chair and two Vice Chairs. No alternative candidates having presented themselves for election, the

current team was unanimously re-elected at the meeting. The independent counter, Professor Raymond Kuhn, announced that he had also received a handful of email votes from members who could not attend at Barcelona, all similarly endorsing the re-election of the current team. The meeting also discussed future plans. It was decided that themes that had attracted strong interest at Barcelona would be those that were prioritised in the coming year or two, namely the future of public service broadcasting, media pluralism, cultural policies in the media, and EU media policy. The section also intends to make a better effort to assemble information on its member's research interests, activities and publications. Suggestions were invited for conference/workshop activity for the coming year. Finally, members were encouraged formally to identify themselves through a dedicated emailing list and website that is currently being developed. The section aims to improve communications among its members and there was support for further actions such as coordinated feedback to policy hearings and consultations.

.