

Środa, 16 listopada 2011 r. - Strasburg

Unowocześnienie prawodawstwa w zakresie VAT w celu pobudzenia jednolitego rynku cyfrowego

Mr President, I can only agree with my colleagues from all political parties that have spoken before me, and I also agree with my friend Diana Wallis that many of our friends and many European consumers are going to get a nasty shock when they go shopping for Christmas. Electronic books, which are growing in popularity thanks to readers such as – maybe I should not enumerate them – Kindle, iPads, etc. are subject to a much higher VAT rate than their paper cousins (which we love, I agree with you, Diana).

The so-called VAT gap – the difference between the reduced VAT rate applied to books in 25 of 27 Member States and the standard VAT rate to which e-books are subject – is stifling the development of the digital single market. It is going in the opposite direction to what we are striving for.

The problem is very simple. Our EU law is out of date. There is no reason why a difference in VAT rate should be applied to the same product simply due to the means of its delivery. It has been said many times that in Europe e-commerce and other digital services lag behind those in many other parts of the world. This blocks the great potential for their growth. Cultural goods should be made as widely available as possible, and we must support the digitalisation of books. I fully agree with my colleagues.

E-books are a new way of reading, maybe especially for the young generation, and we must care about them and give them a chance. This VAT rate reduces the incentive to publishers to further develop the area and for consumers to buy e-books. This will cause us to read less – and we care about our European culture.

So I am sure that, if the European Commission puts forward a reasonable proposal to have the same VAT rate for paper products and digitalised products, we will all support you with great joy.