

## EC Vice-President Neelie Kroes welcomes ECSA representatives

Commissioner Kroes, head of the European Commission's powerful portfolio of the Digital Agenda since 2010, received ECSA Executive Chair Alfons Karabuda and Secretary General Patrick Ager on July 17<sup>th</sup> in her office. The meeting proved to be an excellent opportunity for an in-depth exchange of views on key ECSA issues such as the Global Repertoire Database (GRD), coercive practices of a group of European broadcasters and their affiliated production companies and finally, the directive on collective rights management societies.



VP Kroes was very interested to be briefed on recent GRD developments and as to when the GRD is supposed to go "live". In September 2008, then Competition Commissioner, Neelie Kroes launched a series of Roundtable meetings in order to promote dialogue between industry stakeholders on legal and administrative barriers to the online distribution of music. General agreement was reached on the need for a common framework for consolidating and maintaining accurate data regarding musical works, their ownership and authority to license. Mrs. Kroes was therefore particularly pleased to hear that her initiative is developing very well and that

authors of musical works, i.e. composers and songwriters, are independently represented through ECSA within the GRD governing structure.

As for the ECSA complaint against coercive practices in commissioning of media and TV music, Neelie Kroes was astonished to hear that public and private broadcasters, funded through public money, abuse their dominant position to force composers to sign contracts under duress. Certainly, as pointed out by ECSA Chair Alfons Karabuda, these practices not only point to business failure, but also to a problem of society as a whole as they restrict freedom of choice and quality standards of music works. It was agreed that ECSA should provide further material and information on these practices. Finally, VP Kroes was eager to hear ECSA's views on the proposed directive on collective rights management societies. Whilst pointing out that ECSA is in the progress of studying the document and receiving views from ECSA members, Alfons Karabuda welcomed the directive as an important step to harmonize governance and transparency standards for collecting societies, which are crucial for composers and songwriters. It was stressed that properly managed societies protect the interests of music ->->



writers and that composers and songwriters understand that only collectively they have a fair negotiating position with users of their works. The fact that individual music writers are constantly forced to sign unfair contracts under duress highlights the need of strong and efficient collective rights management. Other issues discussed included further harmonization of copyright such as joint-authorship rules, exceptions and strengthening the position of authors. Neelie Kroes and ECSA representatives agreed to be allies for the upcoming challenges.

### Media Pluralism Conference, European Parliament, Brussels

On June 27<sup>th</sup>, ECSA Secretary General Patrick Ager spoke at the New Media Forum. The event took place in the European Parliament and Mr. Ager outlined key challenges facing ECSA members such as the frequency of unfair contractual practices faced by composers and songwriters.

The event was also attended by British actor Hugh Grant and VP Neelie Kroes and primary dealt with media mergers.

A detailed outline of Mr. Ager's intervention can be found under [www.composeralliance.org](http://www.composeralliance.org)

### Upcoming Events:

ECF General Assembly: Zagreb, Croatia, 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> of September  
ECSA autumn meeting: Reykjavik, Iceland, October 7<sup>th</sup>