[AT] ORF Pulls out of Southern Germany

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Since 18 February 1998, it has no longer been possible to receive ORF's first programme via cable or standard antenna in most of southern Germany. Only in the frontier's immediate vicinity is reception still possible.

As a result of disputes with the channels SAT1, RTL and Pro7 over broadcasting rights, especially for sports events and feature films, which it had acquired solely for Austria (see IRIS 1998-1: 15), ORF has drastically reduced its land-based transmission service, which used to extend far into Bavaria and Baden-Württemburg. Under the "General Cable Agreement" (Kabelgesamtvertrag), concluded in 1991 between Deutsche Telekom, ORF, Swiss television and other foreign providers, cable retransmission ceases also, since foreign stations are relayed only on those local cable networks in whose area land-based reception is also possible. The change affects over 2.4 million South German homes which are connected to the cable network, and many others which have so far received ORF via standard antenna.

In answer to enquiries, ORF has indicated that it intends in future to transmit ORF1 via satellite and in coded form only. Paying subscribers will receive a smart card, enabling them to decode the signals.

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