[CH] language-region TV - first private licence issued

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In April, the Swiss Federal Council (Schweizerische Bundesrat) licensed the private television channel, Tele 24, broadcasting in German and owned by media mogul Roger Schawinsky, to operate a language-region TV service. In its media policy statement of 25 February 1988, the Council had already decided to give Swiss private broadcasters a bigger stake in the market, and to allow more television channels to offer programmes alongside the SRG (Schweizerische Radio- und Fernsehgesellschaft), particularly at language-region level. The aim is to achieve greater variety, and an increase in the electronic media's is still very small share of the Swiss advertising market - a share which, compared to other countries, is still very small and open to expansion. Tele 24's programme is accordingly intended to supplement the programmes already on offer in Switzerland. The programme will be entirely funded by advertisers and sponsors. As the law stands, it does not qualify for a share of TV licence fees.

Tele 24 is expressly required by the Federal Council to respect the language-region nature of its licence. Under the licensing conditions, the programme must cover the whole of German-speaking Switzerland, and reflect the interests of the entire language region. The Council's intention here is to ensure that the programme does not concentrate solely on the more profitable big cities (such as Zurich). Tele 24 is also required to produce or commission at least half of its programmes itself. The intention here is to ensure that it does not compromise its aims by broadcasting an excessive amount of bought material. The licence expires on 31 March 2008, without right to renewal.

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