[GB] Regulator Sets out Guidelines on Permitted Concentration of Digital Broadcasting Services

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Tony Prosser
University of Bristol Law School

The Independent Television Commission (ITC), the UK regulatory body for private sector broadcasting, has issued guidelines on the digital points system setting out the permitted provision of digital programme services. They apply only to digital terrestrial television and do not apply to "qualifying services", which are services provided by existing analogue broadcasters and are automatically entitled to reserved capacity in digital terrestrial multiplexes.

The Broadcasting Act 1996 amended the Broadcasting Act 1990 to set new restrictions on concentration of services. The system is that no one licence holder is allowed to exceed 10 points where the total of all points attributable to all licence digital programmes is 40 or less; the permitted maximum is a quarter of all points. The guidelines provide a detailed system for calculating the points in each case.

Thus

- a service with air time of less than 12 hours per week attracts no points;

- one which serves less than half the population covered by a multiplex, one point;

- with average air time of 12-50 hours per week, one point;

- all other cases, two points.

The total points permissible for each licence holder are

- where all such (digital programme) services total 10 points or less, two points;

- where they total 10-39 points, ten points;

- where they total 40 points or more, one quarter of the total.

Detailed provisions are also included in the guidelines for defining services and preventing evasion by including a flexible definition of those who hold licences.

The Commission will publish every three months a statement of the total number of points currently in the system.

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Independent Television Commission, Guidelines on the Digtial Points System. ITC News Release 13/99, 10 March 1999

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