[CH] Go-Ahead for Revision of the Radio and Television Act

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The Bundesrat (Swiss Federal Council), meeting in cabinet on 19 January 2000, has laid down the principles governing revision of the Radio- und Fernsehgesetzes (Radio and Television Act - RTVG).

The new broadcasting arrangements will operate on the basis of a dual system. On the one hand, media enterprises are to be subject to market forces, with government influence reduced to a minimum and advertising and sponsoring rules relaxed in line with European standards. The objective therefore is one of the deregulation of the private sector. On the other hand, there is a strong public service sector from which the Federal Council demands high quality. The Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG), for example, is subject to more stringent advertising and sponsoring rules than are commercial operators. Programmes targeting specific audiences cannot in principle be funded by license fee revenue. An independent SRG Council (Beirat) is to serve as a forum for the public monitoring and debate of the public service mandate. An independent, quasi-judicial body will continue to be responsible for the enforcement of programming policy.

Private radio and television operators are no longer to be bound by programming requirements. In future, license fees are only exceptionally to be used to offset topographical location disadvantages and are to benefit radio operators only. Broadcasting-like communication services with scant influence on the shaping of public opinion, such as teletext, will in future no longer fall under the RTVG. The Internet, however, is considered a separate case, whose content will only come under the RTVG in respect of broadcasting programmes whose ability to influence public opinion is comparable to that of radio or television.

The new law is also intended to take account of the fact that in future the same infrastructure will be used to transmit radio and television programmes and telecommunication services. Today's single license covering programming and transmission is to be replaced by separate licenses to be issued for programming and transmission infrastructure (frequencies, satellite, cable network, etc). Network operators will be obliged to ensure that programme providers have effective access to transmission networks.

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The eidgenössische Departement für Umwelt, Verkehr, Energie und Kommunikation (Federal Department for the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communication - UVEK) now has the task of drafting a new radio and television bill. It is expected that the new bill will be submitted for consultation in the Autumn and presented to Parliament in the second half of the year 2001, entering into force at the beginning of 2004 at the earliest.

Aussprachepapier zur Revision des Radio- und Fernsehgesetzes (RTVG), vom 19. Januar 2000.

http://www.uvek.admin.ch/doku/presse/2000/d/00012002.pdf

Discussion paper on the revision of the Radio and Television Act (RTVG) of 19 January 2000.

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