[GB] Regulator Consults on the Future of Public Service Broadcasting

IRIS 2000-6:1/16

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The Independent Television Commission, the UK regulator of private sector broadcasting, has commenced a process of consultation on the future of public service broadcasting which already seems likely to prove controversial.

The questions asked include: which elements distinguish public service broadcasting (PSB) from other television channels, whether PSB requirements should be retained for the main terrestrial channels, whether PSB can still be thought of as best delivered by defined channels or is now being met across a wider range of services and platforms, and indeed whether the aims of PSB are still valid. It is also asked to what extent the market will deliver PSB, how long it will be until there is near-universal acceptance of payment by subscription and what alternative funding mechanisms may be possible. It is questioned whether PSB is needed in the private as well as the public sector and asked whether ITV's public service role should be reduced. The effect of digital switchover in relation to PSB is also raised. The paper also includes a summary of existing PSB requirements. Responses to the consultation are requested by 14 July.

As will be apparent, the document contains many more questions than answers and marks only the beginning of the consultation process. However, it has been widely perceived in the UK as being the start of a process of deregulation and a loosening of public service requirements on at least some channels. The Government is also conducting a broader review of the future of broadcasting regulation, including that of the BBC, with a paper due in the Autumn, and it seems likely that public service requirements will be subject to considerable change in the next year or so.

ITC Consultation on Public Service Broadcasting.

http://www.itc.org.uk/documents/upl_245.doc

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