[IE] Radio Takeover Refused

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Marie McGonagle
School of Law, National University of Ireland, Galway

On 29 January 2001, the Independent Radio and Television Commission (IRTC) refused to allow Ulster Television to take over County Media. Ulster Television (UTV) broadcasts in and from Northern Ireland and is part of the UK's Independent Television Network. County Media is the owner of three independent local radio stations in Cork, the second largest city in Ireland. Under section 6.2 of the Radio and Television Act 1988, the IRTC must have regard inter alia to the character, expertise and experience of the applicant. It must also have regard to the desirability of having a diversity of services in the geographical area concerned. The Act does not lay down strict rules as to how the IRTC is to achieve this. The policy of the IRTC since 1988 has been to prevent any existing media outlet from holding more than a 27% stake in any other media concern. It has also favoured retaining a strong local presence in the ownership of local stations. To allow UTV to buy County Media would have marked a fundamental change in that policy. The IRTC has announced, however, that a full review of its policy on ownership is underway. On 1 February 2001 the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment cleared the UTV deal under national mergers and takeovers legislation.

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