[IE] Broadcasting Bill Becomes Law

IRIS 2001-4:1/19

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The Broadcasting Bill 1999 was passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas (Parliament) and signed into law on 14 March 2001. It paves the way for digital broadcasting. It makes provision in Part II for the supply of programme material, including transmission by digital means, and for the establishment of a transmission company (s.5) and a multiplex company (s.8). It also covers digital content contracts (s.12) and electronic programme guides (s.16).

Part III deals with standards in broadcasting. The Independent Radio and Television Commission (IRTC), established by statute in 1988 to regulate the independent sector, will be renamed the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI) and will have an increased role. It will be required inter alia to ensure that the number and categories of broadcasting services made available will "best serve the needs of the people of the island of Ireland, bearing in mind their languages and traditions and their religious, ethical and cultural diversity" (s.11(2)). It will also be required to draw up and enforce codes regarding taste and decency, as well as advertising, teleshopping, etc., as covered by the Television Without Frontiers Directive (s.19, s.21).

The Broadcasting Complaints' Commission, established on a statutory basis in January 1977, will also have an expanded role (ss.22-24). The position of the Authority, which oversees public service broadcasting, is also clarified (s.28). Additional broadcasting services, such as cable and satellite systems are dealt with in Part V.

A further purpose of the Act is to establish on an independent footing the Irish-language television station, TG4 (Part VI). The station has been operating since 1996, but was placed temporarily under the legislation that applies to RTE, the national public service broadcaster.

Broadcasting Act, 2001 of 14 March 2001

http://www.irlgov.ie/bills28/bills/1999/2999/default.htm

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