[FR] Call Put Out for Applications for Operating Terrestrially-broadcast Digital Television

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The launch of terrestrially-broadcast digital services in France was one of the main features of the Act of 1 August 2000 reforming audiovisual communication. This Act amended the Act of 30 September 1986. On 24 July this year, further to wide-ranging consultation with the parties concerned, the CSA (Conseil supérieur de

l'audiovisuel - the audiovisual regulatory authority) put out a call for applications for operating terrestriallybroadcast digital television. After due consideration, the CSA has decided that it ought to be possible to broadcast thirty-three television services on six multiplexes. It should be borne in mind that the Act of 30 September 1986 (as amended) gives priority to the public sector, which is to have eight terrestrially-broadcast digital channels - the present France 2, France 3, La Cinquième, Arte and the parliamentary channel, plus three new channels (news, regional channels, re-runs) that the Government decided to finance last March. The CSA will also ensure the total simultaneous take-over of the private national television services already authorised (TF1, M6 and Canal+), and will issue the other authorisations required by comparing the applications of the private operators according to predefined criteria (experience, protection of diversity, operating prospects, production commitments, etc). Applications must reach the CSA by 29 November. The successful candidates will be selected in March 2002 and agreements signed in July 2002.

The legal framework for terrestrially-broadcast television has been supplemented by the Act of 17 July 2001 covering various provisions of a social, educational and cultural nature, amending the "49% rule" (maximum share that any single natural or legal person may hold in the capital of a company authorised to provide a national television service broadcast terrestrially), which was not appropriate to terrestrially-broadcast digital television. The 49% now only applies to the operators of channels with an annual average audience exceeding 2.5% of the total audience for television services on all supports and using all types of broadcasting. Two decrees are currently in preparation - one is to detail the obligations of the new services in terms of production and broadcasting, and the other covers "must carry" arrangements (the conditions for issuing authorisations to cable operators will include the re-broadcasting of terrestrially-broadcast services received in the area they cover). In view of the schedule for the call for applications, these decrees ought to be published officially by 15 October this

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year.

Décision n° 2001-387 du 24 juillet relative à un appel aux candidatures pour l'édition de services de télévision à vocation nationale diffusés par voie numérique terrestre, JO du 4 août 2001

Decision no. 2001-387 of 24 July concerning a call for applications for offering national digital services terrestrially, Official Journal dated 4 August 2001

Loi n° 2001-624 du 17 juillet 2001 portant diverses dispositions d'ordre social, éducatif et culturel, JO du 18 juillet 2001

Act No. 2001-624 of 17 July 2001 covering various provisions of a social, educational and cultural nature, Official Journal dated 18 July 2001

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