[FR] Minister of Culture and Communication and CSA Postpone Initial Schedule for Terrestrially-broadcast Digital Television

IRIS 2002-7:1/21

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In a letter dated 29 May to the Chairman of the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (the audiovisual regulatory body - CSA) concerning terrestrially-broadcast digital television, the Minister of Culture and Communication proposed that "co-operation between the CSA and the Ministry should be embarked upon as quickly as possible and at the most appropriate level in order to discern more clearly the nature of the technical, economic and legal difficulties and the solutions envisaged for overcoming them to best advantage". At the top of the list of these difficulties are the problems involved in the distribution of the future digital service, marketing, and financing for setting up the distribution infrastructures. In a recent press interview, the Minister recalled that terrestrially-broadcast digital television involved considerable expense, particularly on the part of the public-service audiovisual sector, and that the schedule drawn up eighteen months earlier was proving unrealistic (selection of candidates in early August and signature of agreements at the end of November - see IRIS 2002-2: 8). The CSA, which had begun hearing the 66 candidates on 17 June, decided therefore to postpone choosing the channels from the end of July to the end of October.

Although the private Hertzian channels and associations of producers and directors welcomed the postponement, they called for a suspension of the terrestriallybroadcast digital television procedure until "the entire audiovisual sector in France has stabilised" and "the economic viability of terrestrially-broadcast digital television has been checked, its financial resources ensured and funding for creation guaranteed". They also wanted "the sector to be assured that the advent of terrestriallybroadcast digital television would not involve serious imbalances damaging to those channels that provide the major part of funding for creation of new works".

The managing director of the company TowerCast, which is proposing to install a dozen medium-powered transmitters in the Île-de-France region as it feels that the TDF sites do not provide comprehensive cover for the whole of France, is also in favour of this postponement. He believes that it would provide better conditions for launching terrestrially-broadcast digital television, and establishing cover for the whole of the country.

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Of the 33 future terrestrially-broadcast digital television channels, eight have already been allocated by the Public Service Act (see IRIS 2002-6: 8) and three will be allocated to local channels.

CSA, Communiqué de presse n° 495 "Télévision numérique terrestre : audition et sélection des candidats", 11 juin 2002

http://www.csa.fr/actualite/communiques/communiques_detail.php?id=8616

CSA, press release no. 495 "Terrestrially-broadcast digital television - hearing and selection of candidates", 11 June 2002

http://www.csa.fr/actualite/communiques/communiques_detail.php?id=8616

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