[AT] Bill on Creation of Digitisation and TV Film Support Funds

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At the end of March, the Bundeskanzleramt (Federal Chancellery) presented for discussion a draft Federal Act amending the KommAustria-Gesetz (KommAustria Act) and the Privatfernsehgesetz (Commercial Television Act). It invited interested parties to submit their reactions to the document by 24 April 2003.

A substantial part of the Bill is devoted to the establishment of two new funds: a digitisation fund and a TV film support fund. Both funds are to be allocated EUR 7.5 million per year from the revenue generated by the Federal Government from TV and radio licence fees (money which was previously not earmarked for any specific purpose). The Bill proposes that both funds be administered by the Rundfunk und Telekom Regulierungs-GmbH (Broadcasting and Telecommunications Regulation Company - RTR-GmbH) and the broadcasting industry itself (i.e. the administrative body of the broadcasting regulatory authority).

The purpose of the digitisation fund is to support the technical transition to digital broadcasting. In particular, money from the fund may be used to carry out academic studies and analyses, to subsidise pilot projects and research, to develop programming and additional services, to inform the public, to plan and construct the terrestrial broadcasting infrastructure, to fund the purchase of the necessary terminal equipment, to provide financial incentives for consumers and to finance the costs incurred by KommAustria and the RTR-GmbH as they draw up and implement the digitisation strategy.

The TV film support fund is designed to help finance the production of TV films, series and documentaries by producers who are independent of broadcasters. The fund may be used for the creation of basic screenplay ideas, project development, film production and to pay for the additional staff and equipment required by the RTR-GmbH.

According to the Bill, the RTR-GmbH is required to draw up guidelines for the allocation of these funds. KommAustria must be given the opportunity to air its views before money is allocated from the digitisation fund; grants from the TV film support fund must be backed up by a written, reasoned report by a specially appointed jury of experts.

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The amended Act is due to enter into force on 1 January 2004.

Entwurf für ein Bundesgesetz betreffend die Änderung des KommAustria-Gesetzes und des Privatfernsehgesetzes

http://www.bka.gv.at/medien/entwurf%20kog%20prtvg.pdf

Draft Federal Act amending the KommAustria-Gesetz (KommAustria Act) and the Privatfernsehgesetz (Commercial Television Act)

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