

[FR] Rejection of Scheme Devised by French Government for Increasing Revenue from Television Licence Fee

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The members of the National Assembly's Finance Committee have rejected the scheme the Government had included in the draft budget for 2004 aimed at reducing evasion of payment of the licence fee. Adoption of the amendment would have enabled the tax authorities to obtain the names and addresses of pay television operators' clients with a view to improving payment of the television licence fee. The operators of cable, satellite and encrypted television would have been invited to pass on their entire client files to the tax authorities, making it possible to cut the number of people evading payment of the fee this number is currently estimated at 500,000. The Commission nationale de l'informatique et des libertés (national commission on information technology and liberties CNIL) had denounced the scheme as an infringement of the arrangements for protecting personal information, claiming that it is out of proportion to the anticipated benefits.

Following this opinion, the Government had then sought to reintroduce the possibility of the tax authorities acquiring these files by tabling a sub-amendment, accompanied by new guarantees complying with the CNIL's requirements, ie placing a limit on the field, duration and scope of the information requested. The text also provided that subscribers would be informed of the use that could be made of data concerning them, which could identify them by name. The amendment has nevertheless been rejected.

Other amendments concerning the television licence fee were however adopted by the National Assembly. One of these abolished the lower rate of television licence fee for black and white sets, making it the same as that for colour sets, as MPs felt that a large proportion of these persons did in fact already possess an undeclared colour set. Televisions used in holiday homes would not be liable to the licence fee as long as they were not left there permanently.

Projet de loi de finances pour 2004

<http://www.assemblee-nat.fr/12/budget/plf2004/discussion.asp#culture>

Draft budget for 2004

