[FR] Licence Fee - Senate Adopts Communications Budget

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In the course of the public examination of Article 20 of the draft Budget for 2004 covering the audiovisual licence fee, the Senate adopted the budget for communication during the night of 28-29 November. At the request of the Minister for Culture and Communications, Jean-Jacques Aillagon, the Senators carried out a new distribution of audiovisual credits taking into account the additional revenue expected from licence fees.

Following the rejection by the Members of Parliament on the National Assembly's Finance Committee of the original proposal to combat evasion of payment of the fee by cross-checking the records of pay television operators against taxpayers' records (see IRIS 2003-10: 7), the Senators adopted a new Government amendment.

This amendment extends the obligation of declaration currently only applicable to television sets to decoders used for receiving pay television. This would cover all digital television systems (digital cable, satellite and the future terrestrially broadcast digital television) and Canal+; analog cable does not require a decoder. Thus the declaration scheme is extended to any undertaking that provides the public with systems for conditional access to one or more television services. This provision also applies in the case of rental, at the time of entering into the contract and each time the contract is renewed.

The Government is counting on an increase of EUR 8 million, including all taxes, in the yield from the audiovisual licence fee. This new measure will yield less than cross-checking records, since growth should be 2.65% rather than 3%. The Minister for Communications has also indicated that he has proposed setting up a working party in the New Year to redefine the means of establishing and collecting the licence fee.

Draft Budget for 2004

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