[DE] New Television Projects - Recommendation on Channel Access

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Because the cable networks are technically restricted to 330 Mhz analog, i.e. can carry a maximum of 31 analog programmes, the flood of new TV projects is combining with applications for the dissemination of foreign programmes to create channel capacity problems throughout the Federal Republic.

The proliferation of domestic and foreign satellite programmes is also producing a bottleneck effect. Before, Telekom was always able to make room for new programmes, but now only a few programmes are getting on the cable network - and some of them only by switching with others. The situation is aggravated by Telekom's refusal to expand its digital distribution capacity.

In June 1995, the Conference of Directors of Land Media Authorities (DLM) accordingly recommended that uniform principles on programme choice and joint criteria for the admission of TV programmes, which were not subject to Land regulations on order of access, be drawn up as a guiding basis for the new regulations on cable access.

The conference felt that legal and other differences between the various Länder made uniform regulations on cable access throughout the Federal Republic both impossible in law and undesirable in terms of programmes.

With this proviso, they laid down a number of general criteria to guide decisions on priority of access: plurality of opinion / broad choice of programmes, broad choice of topics / operator's past programme record, journalistic record so far / minority interest coverage / programmes for specific target groups / cultural pluralism, particularly linguistic pluralism / projected reception area / reception quality / acceptability to viewers.

Television programmes were also assigned to categories, for each of which a definite number of cable channels will be reserved.

The DLM also suggested that time-sharing should be considered as a way of increasing programme choice, whenever channels were not being fully used or whenever several operators could sensibly be accommodated on a single channel and are in agreeance with this solution. In spite of the channel shortage, widespread compliance with this recommendation by the Land media authorities

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would serve several purposes: protecting existing programmes and giving new ones a fair chance, as well as ensuring a broad range of programmes from different countries and in different languages, and catering for regional needs into the bargain.

At the same time, the Land media authorities still regard expansion of Telekom AG's broadband cable networks for the distribution of anolog TV programmes beyond 450 Mhz as high priority, since the provision of three hyperband TV channels is not enough to solve the capacity problem.

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