[GB] Television Regulator Responds to Government Review of the Rules on Media Ownership, and Seeks to Regulate Access to Subscription Television

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The Independent Television Commission has responded to the Government's proposals on Media Ownership. It has broadly welcomed the thrust of the proposals, in particular the acceptance of the continuing need for regulation which goes beyond the rules of ordinary competition law. It also supports the limited relaxation proposed in the rules limiting cross-media ownership. The Commission agrees that a more flexible definition of control be adopted which will not be confined to voting rights of share ownership but extends to considerations such as economic interest. The ITC has reservations about the proposal to limit the holding of Channel 3 licences to a maximum of two, preferring a market share limit such as 25% of total advertising revenue. It welcomes the Government's acceptance of the need to licence and regulate conditional access and subscriber management arrangements upon which subscription television depends. At the moment in the UK, the main package of existing analogue satellite broadcasts, the scrambling system, the key and the subscriber management services are controlled by a group of companies associated with News International, and there is no obvious challenger in relation to future services. However, the Commission opposes the proposal that such regulation be entrusted to the Office of Telecommunications, wishing itself to become the regulator as such regulation relates to the availability, content and diversity of subscription services.

Media Ownership: ITC Response to the Government's Proposals, August 1995.

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