[GB] Definitions of "Regional Production" and "Regional Programme" Published

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Both the U.K. Communications Act (2003) (see IRIS 2003-8: 10) and the BBC's Agreement contain obligations on public service broadcasters in respect of regional production and regional programmes. The Act (and the BBC's Agreement) requires that a suitable number and range of such programmes be produced in a suitable range of such centres. The obligation is to be realised by ensuring that a certain proportion of hours transmitted "comprises first-run programmes that meet the definition". The Office of Communications (Ofcom) is reviewing the requisite proportions during 2004.

Such statutory obligations are to be included in licence conditions. Ofcom initiated a consultation in 2003 regarding the definitions of these two terms, which will apply from January 2005.

In effect, the obligations require ITV, Channel 4, Five, BBC1, BBC2 and BBC digital channels together "to provide an agreed amount and range of programmes made outside the M25." The "M25" is the designation of the ring road around London.

A "regional production" has to meet at least two of the following three criteria: the company must have a "substantive business and production based outside the M25"; "at least 70% of the production budget must be spent outside the M25"; and "at least 50% of the production staff should be working outside the M25".

A "regional programme" will be defined in almost identical terms, simply replacing "in the region" for "outside the M25".

Ofcom, Regional production and regional programme definitions

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/codes_guidelines/broadcasting/tv/reg_prod/

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