

[FR] Final Adjustments before the Start of Terrestrially-broadcast Digital Television

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With just a few weeks to go before its launch - scheduled for 31 March for the non-pay channels - terrestrially-broadcast digital television is not really looking ready to make its appearance on the French audiovisual scene. On 20 October, the Conseil d'État cancelled six of the twenty-three authorisations the CSA (Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel - audiovisual regulatory body) had issued to editors of television services intended for terrestrial broadcasting in digital mode (see IRIS 2004-10: 10), which meant it had to start a new call for applications to use the remaining frequencies on 14 December. The original deadline for applications had been 18 February, but that has now been pushed back to 11 March. In fact not six but eight frequencies are to be allocated, as the channels Cuisine TV and Comédie, which were sharing a frequency, and Match TV have asked for their authorisation to be withdrawn.

Furthermore, editors of commercial television services already holding an authorisation to use a frequency in analog mode (TF1, M6 and Canal+), apart from their entitlement to simulcast, may, under Article 30-1 III of the Act of 30 September 1986, have the benefit of a "bonus" channel (an additional channel) to broadcast another service terrestrially in digital mode. Thus an additional channel was allocated in 2002 to TF1 for LCI, and to M6 for M6 Music; Canal+, having had I-télévision refused, ends up with no bonus channel. Further to an application from M6 to alter the bonus channel it had been allocated, thereby broadcasting a different channel, the CSA referred the matter to the Conseil d'État for its opinion. On 8 February, the Conseil d'État gave an unambiguously clear answer in the negative - the authorisation issued to existing nationwide analog channels for a bonus channel was a right to be exercised once only. Moreover, to retain the authorisation, M6 and TF1 must maintain the programme originally authorised without making any substantial changes - it is therefore not possible to change the channel. The Conseil d'État was equally clear about Canal+ - an operator that has been unable to obtain an authorisation for its bonus channel at the time of the initial call for applications may not exercise this right on the occasion of a subsequent call for applications. This at least clarifies the possibilities open to applicants in the current procedure. The schedule is now as follows - the list of applicants will be closed on 22 March, applications will be selected on 10 May, and service editors will be authorised on 7 June.

Appel aux candidatures TNT : modification du nombre de canaux disponibles et nouvelle date de remise des dossiers

http://www.csa.fr/actualite/decisions/decisions_detail.php?id=22415

Call for applications to operate terrestrially-broadcast television in digital mode: change in the number of channels available and new deadline for submitting applications

Avis du Conseil d'Etat du 8 février 2005

http://www.csa.fr/upload/dossier/Avis_Chaine_Bonus.pdf

Opinion of the Conseil d'État of 8 February 2005

