[HU] New broadcasting law

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The "Law on Radio and Television", often called the Media Law has been accepted by the Hungarian Parliament by a majority of 264 against 31 votes. (21st December 1995.) Of the six parties of the House, only the Smallholders voted against the law, the Christian Democrats did not vote.

Supported by four parties (Socialist-s, Free Democrat-s, Hungarian Democratic Forum and Young Democrats), the Government approved and submitted the reframed media law draft to the Parliament on the 16th of November. The bill was based on a six-party consensus, but suddenly the FKGP (Smallholders' Party) opted out, claiming the new law would ignore Hungarian culture, prevent live parliamentary broadcasts and preserve power of the present 'media elite'.

Following the introduction of the new draft, the six-party special committee went on working to dot the `i' 's and cross the `t' 's, surrounded by hordes of lobbyists. On the 20th of November ádám Horváth, President of Hungarian Television, handed in his resignation in protest because the law in his opinion would not provide sufficient financial resources for public service TV in Hungary.

In compliance with OECD directives as conditions of membership, quotas for Hungarian and European films in national and regional broadcasting have been removed. However, national and regional programme providers should spend 6 per cent of their annual advertising income on presenting new Hungarian films, of which 30 percent must not be of their own production.

Restrictions on advertising including sponsorship and advertising alcoholic drinks have been relaxed in order to ensure additional advertising revenues. Hungarian Radio's international broadcasts will be subsidised. According to a new proposal, networks covering an area of more than 50 kilometres may not be established before January 1997. Politicians argued that a nation-wide network of local studios could drain away significant resources before the start of commercial programme providers, forcing down concession fees of national frequencies. However, programmes may be transmitted via satellite and cable systems to viewers in the future too.

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