

[NO] Media Ownership Act - Revisited

IRIS 2006-3:1/34

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The Norwegian Media Ownership Act was enacted in 1997 for the purpose of promoting freedom of expression, genuine opportunities to express one's opinions and a comprehensive range of media. Originally, the Act empowered the supervisory body - the Media Ownership Authority - to intervene in acquisition of ownership interests within the media sector, in order to avoid accumulation in the hands of any one entity of "significant ownership positions" in the national, regional or local markets. A "significant" position was in practice, with regard to the national market, interpreted as a market share exceeding 1/3.

As previously reported (IRIS 2004-9: 14), the former civic/centre coalition Government proposed to raise the intervention-limit- at the national level- to 40 per cent. The proposal was subsequently adopted by the Norwegian Parliament and the revised intervention-limit entered into force as of 1 January 2005.

However, the general elections, held in 2005, put a new labour/socialist coalition in power, and in its declaration of assent, the new Government expressed its intent to yet again change the Media Ownership Act in order to prevent too strong a concentration of ownership interests. A recent Green Paper carries out this manifesto by proposing a reduction of the intervention-limit to the original quota of 1/3 at the national level (this would complete the circle). The Ministry of Cultural and Church Affairs also proposes to empower the Media Ownership Authority with the authority to counter (based on the proposed new limit) acquisitions made between the presentation of the Green Paper and the (possible) future enactment of the proposal, something that seems to conflict with the constitutional prohibition against retroactive legislation.

The Government will now take up the dossier and should announce its views within the months ahead.

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http://www.odin.dep.no/kkd/norsk/dok/hoering/under_behandling/043061-080089/dok-bn.html

Green paper relating to the Media Ownership Act

