[FR] CSA Authorises Changes of Category for Radio Stations without Procedure for Calling for Applications

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On 4 April, the *Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel* (French audiovisual regulatory authority - CSA) announced its decision on 141 applications from radio stations wishing to change holder and category without going through the procedure for calling for applications. In 1989 the CSA decided on five categories of radio station (A: services provided by associations; B: independent local, regional and themed services; C: local services broadcasting the programme of a nationwide themed network in addition to a local interest programme; D: nationwide themed services; E: nationwide general-interest services) in order to give some shape to the radio scene and ensure its diversity. Since 2004, paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article 42-3 of the Act of 30 September 1986 (as amended) have made it possible for the CSA to authorise changes of holder and, if appropriate, changes in category without having to go through the procedure for calling for applications. Legislation sets limits on this, however, to prevent the radio scene becoming destabilised. Specifically, the CSA may not grant approval until it has checked that the anticipated operation is compatible with "the preservation of equilibrium in terms of advertising, particularly at the local level" and that the criteria laid down in Article 29 of the Act of 30 September 1986 (ensuring the plurality of currents of socio-cultural expression, the diversification of operators, the need to avoid abuse of a dominant position and practices hampering the free exercise of competition, etc) are satisfied. Moreover, changes in holder and category without going through the procedure of calling for applications are not open to services provided by associations that fulfil a mission of local social communication (category A), or to independent local, regional and themed services (category B). Having obtained information on the position of all the players concerned in the radio scene, and on the basis of the criteria recalled above, the CSA has authorised 93 of the 107 applications it received concerning the full take-up of nationwide networked programmes (change from category C to D: nationwide themed services), in particular to ensure that listeners will still be able to receive programmes produced locally. On the other hand, the CSA accepted only 7 of the 34 applications it received for commencing local operation (change from category D to C: local services broadcasting the programme of a nationwide themed network in addition to a local interest programme). These decisions follow on from the authorisations issued by the CSA in November 2005 in respect of applications to change holder without changing category.

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