[FR] Public Consultation with a View to Launching HDTV and Mobile TV

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On 4 May the French President set up the Digital Strategy Committee, which is responsible for assisting the changeover of the whole country from analog television to digital television by 2011. At the same time, Mr Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, Minister for Culture and Communication, launched a procedure for consulting with professionals in the sector on proposals for amending the Act of 30 September 1986, with a view to the launch of terrestrially-broadcast high-definition digital television and mobile television. Two alternative procedures were suggested for mobile television - one procedure consisting of selection by services editors (which would favour existing terrestrially-broadcast digital television), and another by content distributor (which would favour channel packages), with the possibility of a hybrid combination. Under both procedures, the intention is that the editors and distributors of mobile TV services should be required to pay a fee, the proceeds of which could contribute to financing creation and the operations necessary for the introduction of “all-digital” TV. For high-definition television, account needs to be taken of the scarcity of radio-electric resources in terrestrially-broadcast digital television - high-definition broadcasting for all the services editors already authorised is not a possibility. The purpose of the legislative amendments proposed by the Government is therefore to enable the audiovisual regulatory authority (*Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel* - CSA) to organise a call for tenders with the criteria for issuing authorisations adapted to the specific features of HDTV, so that the CSA would be able to take into account applicants’ undertakings as regards the production and broadcasting of such programmes.

The consultation ended on 19 May, and it shows that there appears to be a consensus among the channels and the operators on mobile TV - all would be in favour of selection by service editor and opposed to the payment of a fee. There is no such consensus regarding HDTV. One side, which includes France Télécom and TF1, is in favour of allocating authorisation for high definition to those major national terrestrially-broadcast channels prepared to bear the cost of the technology, and on the other side there are the new free channels in terrestrially-broadcast digital television which feel that high definition should be reserved solely for those pay channels already using MPEG-4 decoders. Further to this consultation, the Government should be drafting a bill early in June for presentation to the council of ministers on 19 July, before it is discussed in Parliament in September. In addition, the CSA has just authorised TF1, M6,

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Canal+, Arte, and the France Télévisions channels to broadcast their programmes in high definition experimentally between 29 May and 17 July 2006, according to a precise schedule.

Consultation publique sur la modification de la loi du 30 septembre 1986 en vue de permettre le lancement de la haute définition sur la télévision numérique de terre et de la télévision numérique personnelle

http://www.ddm.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/consultation270406.pdf

Public consultation on amending the Act of 30 September 1986 with a view to enabling the launch of high definition broadcasting on terrestrially-broadcast digital television and personal digital television

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