[TR] Commercial Radio and TV Stations Start Broadcasting in Kurdish

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Until 2002 the Turkish laws prohibited the broadcasting of programmes in languages or dialects (in particular Kurdish) other than Turkish. In the reform programmes for the European Union accession process the demand for permission to broadcast in other languages and dialects had been taken into account. The third EU adjustment package was approved by the Turkish parliament on 3 August 2002. It allowed inter alia constitutional and legal arrangements for broadcasting and education in mother tongues. The provisions on broadcasting are included in the Law concerning the Establishment of Radio and Television Channels (Law no: 3954).

The basic principle of Turkish as a broadcasting language had been amended and now broadcasting in different languages and dialects "used by Turkish citizens traditionally in their daily life" is allowed. In accordance with the law, RTÜK, the Radio and Television Authority, was entitled to prepare regulations before broadcasting in other languages could commence.

The first progamme in Kurdish had been broadcast by the public channel TRT in June 2004, six months after the approval of the RTÜK regulation. In March 2006 commercial channels followed with programmes in Kurdish.

12 commercial TV and radio broadcasters applied for permission to broadcast programmes in dialects. Three of them received permission: Gün TV, Söz TV and for radio Medya FM.

According broadcasters the permission to broadcast in dialects has a symbolic importance. Nevertheless the limits for such programmes have been criticized. There are time limits (five hours per week for radio channels with not more than 60 minutes per day, and four hours per week for TV channels with not more than 45 minutes per day) and the obligation to broadcast subtitles in Turkish. However, this liberalisation is important. Before the adoption of the law, broadcasting programmes which were not in Turkish (and especially in Kurdish) had been faced with criminal investigation.

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