[FR] An End to Advertising on Public Channels

IRIS 2008-2:1/17

Amélie Blocman
Légipresse

At a press conference on 8 January 2008, the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, made an announcement that received great attention, when he said that he was considering bringing an end to all advertising on the public channels (France 2, France 3, France 4 and France 5). His comment was that “if the public-service channels operate according to the same criteria, the same demands and the same logic as the private channels, then there is no point in having a public service”.

The public-service channels are financed by a licence fee (EUR 116 per household in mainland France in 2007) and advertising. The resources generated by the licence fee for the group should amount to EUR 1.945 billion in 2008; the resources generated by advertising amounted to EUR 802 million in 2007. The amount of air time for advertising is limited by regulation to eight minutes in any one hour on the France Télévisions channels, and each advertising spot on these channels must not last longer than four minutes (compared with eight for the other channels). Ending advertising, qualified as “a real cultural revolution in public-service television”, would be offset by “a tax on the high advertising revenue of the private channels and an infinitesimal tax on the turnover of new means of communication such as mobile phones and Internet access”. Mr Sarkozy did not, however, mention the possibility of an increase in the licence fee.

On 11 January, the French Prime Minister, François Fillon, announced that the Government was expecting “to reach the bill stage in 2008”, with the aim of “achieving application” on 1 January 2009. Christine Albanel, Minister for Culture and Communication, for her part, said that she had asked for advertising sponsorship to be maintained within the public-sector group (10% of revenue from advertising). Ms Albanel also announced that greater flexibility would be introduced into the rules for television advertising when the Directive on audiovisual media services is transposed into French law, which will happen when the act abolishing advertising on the France Télévisions channels is passed. It is expected that there should be a consultation on the topic shortly, with a view to concluding “a new contract for the public-sector audiovisual service” with the country. In order to facilitate this, a discussion forum will shortly be launched on the Ministry of Culture’s Internet site, “to gather the suggestions and preferences of the people of France”. The Chairman of France Télévisions stated that he felt that a “clarification” had now been made, validating the group’s editorial strategy in favour of quality programming.

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026