

[NO] Non-Commercial Public Access TV Licensed in the DTT Network

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On 14 March 2008, the Norwegian Media Authority granted a license to an association named Foreningen Frikanalen for transmission of a non-commercial public access TV channel (also called “open channel”) in the digital terrestrial network in Norway. The channel has a must carry status and is expected to start broadcasting in September this year.

Foreningen Frikanalen is open to all non-commercial and non-governmental organisations, which base their activities on voluntary work. As of today, Foreningen Frikanalen has 50 direct members and 130 associated members. However, according to the license obligations, Foreningen Frikanalen must give airtime not only to members, but also to all non-commercial organisations, associations and individuals based on objective, transparent and non-discriminatory criteria. It may not favour its own members when allocating airtime and scheduling programmes. The channel should not have a religious, ethnic or other particular profile that may exclude single groups from joining. An independent board of complaints must be established to handle possible disputes. Foreningen Frikanalen is obliged to appoint an editor-in-chief, but may delegate editorial responsibility for single programmes to the different organisations in charge of producing the content. All participants are responsible for acting in conformity with the Broadcasting legislation. Advertisements are not allowed, but sponsorship of programmes will be accepted under certain conditions.

The license to establish and operate the digital terrestrial network in Norway was granted to Norges televisjon as (NTV) in June 2006. The process of digitalising the old analogue terrestrial network started in September 2007 and NTV is making the network operational on a region by region basis. It is expected that NTV will complete the digitalisation by November this year. During the course of 2008 and 2009 the old analogue network will be shut down. In two regions the digital switchover has already been finalised. According to its license obligations, NTV is required to offer capacity to a non-commercial open channel. Foreningen Frikanalen has been given access to a 24 hour channel, but until the digital switchover has been finalised, the licensee may share the allocated channel with local television and will only use the airtime between 12 pm - 5.30 pm. The license will expire in 2021, at the same time as the DTT license.

