[AT] Government Programme Includes New Media Law Plans

IRIS 2009-1:1/8

Robert Rittler
Gassauer-Fleissner Attorneys at Law, Vienna

At the end of November 2008, the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) agreed to form a coalition government. They also adopted a government programme for the five-year parliamentary term. The Government is hoping to achieve the following media policy objectives between now and 2013:

1. The KommAustria media authority will be strengthened further. Rather than acting monocratically as it has up to now, its decisions will be taken in future by a media committee, a public broadcasting committee and two telecommunications committees. Additional committees may be created where necessary.

2. As well as its existing responsibilities for State aid (TV fund, press and journalism aid, digitisation fund), the Rundfunk- und Telekom-Regulierungs-GmbH (RTR) is responsible for managing the new State aid scheme for private media providers. The funding available through the *Fernsehfilmförderungsfonds* (TV film support fund) will be increased in order to strengthen the Austrian film industry and improve Austria's competitiveness as a centre of film and media production. In order to strengthen the dual broadcasting system, consideration is being given to the introduction of support for private commercial and non-commercial broadcasters. If this is introduced, it will be administrated by the RTR. In addition, the *RTR* is broadening its areas of responsibility to include the fields of media research, support for basic and further education and ICT development (Internet offensive).

3. The Federal Government recognises the key role played by *Österreichische Rundfunk* (Austrian broadcasting corporation - ORF) in terms of democratic and social policy. ORF will be protected as a content provider with a clear public service remit that is active nationally and internationally and partly funded through the licence fee, including by means of financing systems that conform to EC law. If required by EC funding guidelines, consideration will be given to stepping up State supervision of ORF.

4. The Directive on audiovisual media services and market transparency will be transposed into Austrian law in 2009. As part of this process, the advertising rules applicable to Austrian broadcasters will be reviewed.

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5. Legal principles will be established for the licensing of digital radio.

6. Media law provisions protecting the personality rights of individuals, particularly victims of crime, will be improved. The relevant system of sanctions will be made more effective. Protection of identity will be broadened to include relatives of both victims and perpetrators, as well as witnesses in criminal proceedings.

7. An advertising tax of 5% is currently levied on the revenue generated from certain forms of advertising. The Federal Government would like to negotiate the abolition of this tax with the Austrian *Länder* , which also receive some of the proceeds from this tax.

Regierungsprogramm für die XXIV. Gesetzgebungsperiode

http://www.spoe.at/bilder/d268/Regierungsprogramm.pdf

Government programme for the XXIV parliamentary term

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