[FR] Discussion on the Maintenance of Daytime Advertising on France Télévisions Channels

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On 8 January 2008, the French President Nicolas Sarkozy announced his desire to abolish advertising on the public-sector television channels. A year later the Act on audiovisual communication and new-style public-service television was adopted, following on from the recommendations of the "Commission on the new-style public-service television" chaired by Mr Copé, introducing the gradual abolition of advertising on public-service channels between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. (in force since 5 January 2009), pending its total abolition by the end of 2011 (end of analog television) (see IRIS 2009-4:10/14).

Things do not seem to be as static in reality as they are portrayed in the Act, however. Thus at the end of January the European Commission instigated infringement proceedings against France for its "telecom tax" of 0.9% of turnover that telecom operators were required by law to pay to compensate for the abolition of advertising on public-sector television (see IRIS 2009-9: 5/4).

The MP Christian Kert, who is also a director of France Télévisions, quickly followed by Jean-François Copé, chairman of the majority UMP group in the National Assembly, stated that they were opposed to the abolition of advertising before 8 p.m. on the France Télévisions channels, and were even planning to table a bill on the matter. If advertising were to be abolished totally, there would be a shortfall of about 400 million euros in the financing for the public-sector audiovisual group, if the telecom tax were to be discontinued. A number of MPs wonder whether the State is in a position to provide this financing. There is also some uncertainty hanging over the private-sector channels, inasmuch as the anticipated "opportunity effect" did not happen and inasmuch as the transfer of the volume of advertising from the public sector to the private sector does not seem to be sufficient. The President is not in favour of such a turnaround, however. "The law will be applied. It provides for a consultation in May 2011 on whether advertising should be maintained before 8 p.m. or not. That date will be kept. But the aim remains the total abolition of advertising", a presidential spokesperson stated. Indirectly, the possible maintenance of advertising before 8 p.m. could compromise the sale of the France Télévisions Publicité public corporation, which is currently adjourned indefinitely. A debate on the application of the Act of 5 March 2009 is on the agenda for the Senate on 10 May, and a bill "to ensure the safeguarding of public-service television", through the maintenance of daytime advertising on public-sector television, tabled by the

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Senate member Jack Ralite, is to be discussed on 20 May 2010.

Proposition de loi visant à assurer la sauvegarde du service public de la télévision, présentée par M. Jack Ralite et les membres du groupe CRC-SPG

http://www.senat.fr/leg/ppl09-384.html

Bill to ensure the safeguarding of public-service television, tabled by Mr Jack Ralite and members of the CRC-SPG group

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