[DE] Kirchhof Report on Household Tax Published

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Christian M. Bron
Institute of European Media Law (EMR), Saarbrücken/Brussels

In his report on the financing of public service broadcasting, published on 6 May 2010, Prof. Dr Kirchhof, former Federal Constitutional Judge, recommends that the licence fee obligation should no longer be dependent on whether the fee payer owns a broadcasting reception device, but should apply to each household.

ARD, ZDF and Deutschlandradio had commissioned Kirchhof to write the report. He believes that linking the licence fee to reception devices is inappropriate, raising doubts over the legality of the current licence system. One reason for this is media convergence. Whereas in the early days of television a single device tended to be used in each household or business premises, these days increasing numbers of people carry a broadcasting and television device around with them in the form of a mobile telephone or PC. The current rules no longer reflect reality, are inappropriate and are therefore unfair.

The current monthly licence fee comprises a basic charge of EUR 5.76 and an additional TV fee of EUR 12.22 payable by owners of devices capable of receiving television programmes, except where legal exemptions apply.

The household tax proposed by Kirchhof would apply to each private household, regardless of whether or not the householder owns a reception device. The distinction between the basic and overall fee would be abolished, and replaced by a single charge for all households. Businesses would pay a business premises tax, depending on the number of employees. Low-income households would either remain exempt or would receive a State allowance to the value of the licence fee, payable with their housing benefit.

The cost of the broadcasting tax would continue to depend on the broadcasters' needs. The current system, under which the financial needs of public service broadcasters are established by the KEF, would be maintained.

The *Rundfunkkommission* (Broadcasting Commission) of the *Länder* hopes to agree how the licence fee will be collected in future at the Conference of Minister-Presidents on 9 June 2010. An unofficially published draft *Rundfunkgebührenstaatsvertrag* (Inter-State Agreement on broadcasting fees), dated 31 March 2010, contains most of the recommendations of the Kirchhof report.

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Gutachten über die Finanzierung des öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunks vom April 2010

http://www.unternehmen.zdf.de/fileadmin/files/Download_Dokumente/DD_Das_ZDF/Gutachten_Kirchhof_Finanzierung_oeffentlich_rechtlichen_Rundfunks.pdf

Report on the funding of public service broadcasting, April 2010

Staatsvertragsentwurf

http://carta.info/carta/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/StV-Entwurf_Runfunkfinanzierung_310320101_II.pdf

Draft Inter-State Agreement

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