[CH] Relaxation of Rules on Advertising during SSR Television Programmes

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A number of amendments have been made to the Swiss Radio and Television Decree (ORTV) with a view to relaxing the rules on advertising and sponsorship, although the modifications, in force since 1 April 2010, concern private-sector broadcasters only. The Federal Council has deferred its decision on a possible relaxation of the provisions governing the public-sector broadcasting company SSR after examining the amount of the licence fee for receiving radio and television broadcasts (see IRIS 2010-5/12). In June 2010, the Federal Council decided not to increase the fee for the years 2011 to 2014, although it acknowledged that SSR needed more resources in order to be able to finance the services it offered. These requirements will have to be covered by savings made within the company, more liberal advertising, greater efficiency in collecting the reception fee, and an increase in income by increasing the number of persons required to pay the fee.

As a result, the Federal Council has made a number of further amendments to the ORTV in order to relax somewhat the regulations on advertising during television programmes broadcast by SSR. These new arrangements, which will come into force on 1 January 2011, will allow SSR to receive additional income. The Federal Council's revision does not however alter the scheme that applies to news broadcasts and political current affairs magazines, which may only include a commercial break if the programme is longer than 90 minutes. On the other hand, all other programmes broadcast outside peak viewing times may now be interrupted by commercial breaks every 30 minutes; during peak viewing times (between 6 and 11 p.m.), these broadcasts remain subject to the scheme that applied before the new provisions came into force, i.e., a single commercial break is allowed every 90 minutes. Lastly, the maximum duration of authorised advertising each day is to be increased from 8% to 15%.

These relatively restrictive regulations take account of the public-service mission incumbent on SSR's programmes. The Federal Council maintains that, in the interests of viewers, SSR's television offer should look less commercial than its private-sector competitors, particularly at peak viewing times.

For greater efficiency in collecting the reception fee, radio and television licences are henceforth to be billed annually rather than quarterly, achieving savings of between 9 and 10 million Swiss francs each year on printing and postage costs.

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Anyone wishing to continue with quarterly billing will have to pay the extra cost involved.

Ordonnance sur la radio et la télévision, modification du 13 octobre 2010

http://www.admin.ch/ch/f/as/2010/5219.pdf

Radio and Television Decree (ORTV), amended on 13 October 2010

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