

[HU] Agreement between the European Commission and the Hungarian Government on the Amendment of Media Acts

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*Márk Lengyel
Körmendy-Ékes & Lengyel Consulting, Budapest*

Following an exchange of letters between the Hungarian Minister of Public Administration and Justice and Commissioner Neelie Kroes and discussions at expert level the Hungarian government and the European Commission have agreed on a set of amendments to the newly adopted Hungarian media Acts (Act CIV. of 2010 on Freedom of Expression and on the Basic rules of media content and Act CLXXXV. of 2010 on Media Services and Mass Media; see IRIS 2010-8/34, IRIS 2010-9/6, IRIS 2011-1/37, IRIS 2011-2/3 and IRIS 2011-2/30).

The agreed amendments comprise four issues. Their most important elements can be summarised as follows:

- The obligation of balanced coverage: The new Hungarian acts have maintained the traditional requirement of balanced coverage of news for radio and television broadcasting and extended this requirement to presentation of news by on-demand audiovisual media services. As a result of the agreement with the European Commission the Hungarian government has expressed its readiness to exclude non-linear audiovisual services from the balanced coverage obligation. The scope of this obligation will therefore be restricted to television and radio broadcasting in accordance with the principle of proportionality.
- The “country of origin” principle: The Commission and the Hungarian Government agreed to delete the imposition of fines from the catalogue of possible measures that the media authority may apply following the procedure defined by Article 3. of the AVMS Directive.
- Registration rules: The registration procedure will be amended to clarify that the notification of non-linear audiovisual media services and press products and their subsequent registration do not constitute an authorisation regime.
- Protection of groups and communities: The Hungarian Media Acts prohibit offending any community by the media in a direct or even in an indirect way. This rule has traditionally been part of Hungarian media regulation; the previous Broadcasting Act of 1996 also included a similar provision. However, the Hungarian Government has agreed to abolish this rule as the Commission raised concerns regarding its compatibility with Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental

Rights.

The corresponding amendment of the Media Acts will be submitted to the Parliament within the shortest possible time.

Press release of the European Commission: Vice-President Kroes welcomes amendments to Hungarian Media Law (MEMO/11/89), 16 February 2011

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/11/89>

