[MT] General Interest Objectives Regulations

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Kevin Aguilina
Faculty of Laws, University of Malta

In exercise of the powers conferred by Article 40(3) of the Broadcasting Act, the Prime Minister, after consultation with the Broadcasting Authority, has issued the General Interest Objectives (Television Services) (Selection Criteria) Regulations, 2011, Legal Notice 240 of 2011. These regulations came into force on 21 June 2011 and set out the criteria to be adopted by the Broadcasting Authority in the selection of television services that fulfil a general interest objective. Two categories of general interest objective television services are dealt with: generalist and niche.

In so far as generalist general interest objective television services are concerned, such services are obliged to broadcast a minimum of programme content of a continuous duration of 16 hours, covering broadcasting hours between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. Such a television service has to offer a wide range of quality programming that addresses a broad range of genres. Thirty-five per cent of the output during the mandatory broadcasting time is to consist of a selection of at least five genres that are considered to fulfil a core or extended public service obligation. These genres are listed in Schedule A. Generalist television services may only broadcast up to a maximum of three hours of teleshopping windows per day in the mandatory broadcasting time. In addition, they have to broadcast at least one news bulletin during the mandatory broadcasting schedule. Another obligation imposed upon such generalist television services is that they have to broadcast at least 30 minutes of weekly programming accessible to people with hearing disabilities. Furthermore, such generalist television services have to produce at least one current affairs programme per week during the period from October to June of each year. Finally, the duration of repeat programming on a generalist general interest objective television service cannot exceed an annual average of thirty-five per cent of the total mandatory broadcasting time. This requirement does not however apply to repeat broadcasts of documentaries, dramas, cinematographic productions and educational and cultural programmes.

In so far as niche general interest objective television services are concerned, these may be of a highly varied nature and consequently the Broadcasting Authority is expected to be flexible in the application of these regulations and to be ready to adapt in order to address particular requests that would enhance the range of offer to consumers. Such niche television services are to broadcast a minimum duration of ten hours of programme content per day, which may be

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spread over broadcasting hours between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. In addition, such services have to predominantly transmit programmes from a limited number of genres that are considered to fulfill a core or extended public service obligation, as listed in Schedule A. Sixty per cent of the output (whether first run or repeat) during the mandatory broadcasting timetable has to consist of such programmes. Furthermore, a niche television service may only broadcast a maximum of two hours of teleshopping windows per day in the mandatory broadcasting time. Finally, the duration of repeat programming on a niche service is normally not to exceed an annual average of forty-five per cent of the total mandatory broadcasting time. This requirement does not however apply to re-runs of programmes first broadcast by other services or the repeat broadcasts of documentaries, dramas, cinematographic productions and educational and cultural programmes.

The list of programme genres in Schedule A comprises the following: the transmission of events of a national character as determined from time to time by the Government; public service announcements without payment; one-off transmissions of Parliamentary debates; current affairs programmes; discussion programmes dealing with topics of a social, cultural, educational, environmental, economic, industrial or political nature; programmes dealing with religious topics and the transmission of Mass on Sundays and some holy days of obligation; programmes that have children as their principal audience; drama programmes in Maltese, with preference being given to original dramas in Maltese; programmes that are cultural in nature and especially those that enhance the Maltese language, the arts and culture; as well as programmes of classical music; programmes that are focused on Gozo and in particular that highlight Gozitan society, culture and way of life; programmes that focus on Maltese communities abroad; general information programmes; programmes that are educational in nature; news bulletins; and programmes featuring local sports.

General Interest Objectives (Television Services) (Selection Criteria) Regulations, 2011

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