[DE] Approval of 15th Inter-State Broadcasting Agreement

IRIS 2012-2:1/14

Peter Matzneller
Institute of European Media Law (EMR), Saarbrücken/Brussels

Having been adopted by 14 Land parliaments in recent months, the 15th Rundfunkänderungsstaatsvertrag (Agreement Amending the Inter-State Broadcasting Agreement) has now been approved by the parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia and finally, on 16 December 2011, by the Landtag of Schleswig-Holstein.

The agreement concerns the financing of public service broadcasting. In response to changing user behaviour, it regulates the switch from a device-based licence fee to a household-based tax from 2013, with continued exemptions (e.g., for people receiving income support or unemployment benefit, or for deaf-blind people) and reductions (e.g., for partially deaf or blind people and those with a disability rating of 80 or above) (see IRIS 2010-6/21).

For business premises, the level of the tax depends on the number of employees. For example, under the ten-step sliding scale, places of business with eight employees or fewer will pay one-third of the licence fee. Those with between 50 and 249 employees will pay five times the licence fee, while those with 500 to 999 staff members will pay 20 times the amount. At the top of the scale, businesses with more than 20,000 employees will have to pay the equivalent of 180 licence fees.

In addition to this, owners of commercial premises with hotel and guest rooms will pay one-third of the fee for each room from the second room upwards. The same proportion must also be paid for each licensed motor vehicle used for business purposes, although an exemption applies for one vehicle per place of business.

After ARD and ZDF requested a higher level of funding for the 2013-2016 licensing period, leading to speculation in areas of the media and among the public that the broadcasting tax would be raised as part of the financing reforms, the Kommission zur Ermittlung des Finanzbedarfs (Committee for the Investigation of Financial Requirements - KEF) made clear in a statement that the monthly fee would remain unchanged at EUR 17.98, at least at the start of the forthcoming four-year licensing period, subject to a review of the level of revenue actually generated.

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In accordance with its provisions, the 15th Agreement Amending the Inter-State Broadcasting Agreement will enter into force on 1 January 2013.

15. Rundfunkänderungsstaatsvertrag

http://www.rlp.de/ministerpraesident/staatskanzlei/medien/

15th Agreement Amending the Inter-State Broadcasting Agreement

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