

[SE] Bill on the introduction of digital TV

IRIS 1997-1:1/25

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In IRIS 1996-4:11 we announce the publication of a report on the introduction of digital terrestrial broadcasting in Sweden. The report has been fiercely debated and criticized for being too optimistic and drastic. The Swedish Government believes there are no grounds strong enough at present for making such a far reaching decision as the report suggested.

The Government has consequently presented a Bill on terrestrial digital TV broadcasting. The Bill opts for the gradual introduction of digital TV. During an introduction period of one year, starting at the earliest in the autumn of 1997, digital transmissions will be distributed only in two to three different areas. Each area will be assigned at least two TV broadcasting frequencies. A special coordinator shall be appointed who will be responsible for choosing these introduction areas as well as for drawing up a model for the collaboration between the broadcasters on technical matters.

According to the Bill, TV broadcasting will be the core service of the digital broadcasting projects, but other services, such as educational telecommunication services of various types, may be provided alongside this core service. The key factors which will be taken into account in the decisionmaking process, are freedom of expression, accessibility and diversity. The choice of TV channels to be licensed will be made by the Government but the Radio and TV Authority will propose candidates and together with a Parliamentary committee, will monitor the broadcasting and be involved in the continuous evaluation. Important criteria for the choice will be local and regional programming, programming serving different interests and tastes and programming supporting Swedish culture. The licenses granted by the Government will be issued for a maximum period of four years. The analogue TV-channels distributed in the terrestrial network today, i.e., SVT (with channels SVT1 and SVT2) and TV4, will be given the opportunity to participate in the first one year introduction phase of digital broadcasting. The terms of this participation are not specified in the Bill. The Bill stipulates, however, that the participating companies will have to cover the costs of the digital transmissions.

Public service TV will, according to the Bill, receive an additional 200 million SEK from funds to cover these costs, together with a possibility to introduce paid services other than pay-TV). The Bill does not mention, however, how private operators can obtain additional revenues to cover the additional costs of digital

broadcasting. It is clear, however, that there will be no changes regarding the current rules on advertising and sponsorship, meaning that private commercial TV will essentially have to depend on the same financial sources as before. The cost of set-top-boxes will also not be subsidized by the State, but will bear on the consumers. After one year the Parliamentary committee will evaluate and report on the financial viability of the digital transmissions. The Government intends to decide on the future of digital broadcasting on the basis of the experience gained after the one year evaluation period. Therefore, the Bill stipulates that if the evaluation shows that the digital transmissions turn out not to be viable from a financial point of view after the initial period, the licenses granted will either not be renewed or their renewal will be postponed.

Bill 1996/97: 67, Digitala TV-sändningar, 20.12.1996

<http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c4/17/89/f491bc6f.pdf>

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