[GB] ITC draft code of conduct on electronic programme guides

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Stefaan Verhulst
PCMLP University of Oxford

The Independent Television Commission (ITC) has issued a draft code of conduct on licensing (analogue and digital) Electronic Programme Guides (EPG), for which the consultation period ran until 7 February 1997. In broad terms, an EPG service has two main functions. It allows a broadcaster to promote and provide information about his programme or additional services and to market and package them in manner which is likely to be more convenient for viewers. It is also seen as the only manageable way to select a programme in the near future with the expansion of the number of television services through digital transmission. Oftel, who will also regulate EPGs insofar as they relate to the use of the conditional access system (CAS), already expressed in its consultative document on CAS (see IRIS 1997-1:15) that "a single EPG under the control of an organisation linked to a broadcaster could potentially have powerful anti-competitive effects" (Section 21). Section 2(2) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 requires the ITC to discharge its functions in the manner which it considers is best calculated to ensure that a wide range of services is available throughout the UK and to ensure fair and effective competition in the provision of licensed services and services connected to them. The purpose of this Code is to ensure this statutory duty of the ITC in relation with EPG services. In most cases the provision of a EPG service will require a television programme service, a digital additional services or an additional services license from the ITC or is considered as a connected service, when it carries information about programme services which are themselves licensed by the ITC. The ITC also considers it appropriate to ensure that the access for broadcasters to EPG services and, through EPGs, viewers' access to television programme and additional services facilitates the provision of a wide range of such services.

Draft ITC Code of Conduct on Electronic Programme Guides. London: ITC, January 1997.

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