[CH] Ständerat approves universal broadcasting charge

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After the Nationalrat (the larger of the two chambers of the Swiss Federal Parliament, comprising 200 members) had already given the green light, media reports indicate that on 19 June 2014 the Ständerat (the smaller chamber of the Swiss Federal Parliament, which represents the individual cantons and has 46 members) also agreed to the introduction of a universal broadcasting charge, which all companies and private households will have to pay, whether they own a reception device or not. Like the broadcasting charge that replaced the licence fee in Germany at the start of 2013, the new Swiss broadcasting charge is a universal charge that every household will have to pay.

In the context of a changing technological environment, in which television can now be viewed on mobile phones, for example, the Bundesrat (Swiss Federal Government) is endeavouring to update the Swiss broadcasting fee system by amending the Radio-und Fernsehgesetz (Radio and Television Act - RTVG). In view of the increased revenue that the new system is expected to generate, the Bundesrat plans to reduce the current annual charge of CHF 462 (EUR 380) per household to around CHF 400 (EUR 330).

Although its decision represents a significant step towards the introduction of a new broadcasting charge, the Ständerat believes some minor amendments are required.

Whereas the Nationalrat had wanted to support households without a television set by exempting them from the new charge for five years, the Ständerat, like the Bundesrat, opposes this interim arrangement on account of the fact that 99.4% of households have some form of reception device. The Ständerat and Bundesrat agree that the notion of a simple system that does not require expensive control mechanisms is incompatible with the granting of individual exemptions.

The Ständerat also removed a provision that had been added to the draft Act by the Nationalrat, under which 36% of the revenue from the charge would have been used to fund radio and 64% to finance television. It thought that such a requirement could prove to be a hindrance in a dynamic media landscape.

On account of the amendments proposed by the Ständerat, the matter has now been referred back to the Nationalrat.

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Medienberichte zur Billigung der Einführung einer allgemeinen Rundfunkgebührenpflicht durch den Schweizer Ständerat

http://www.heise.de/newsticker/meldung/Schweizer-Parlament-feilt-noch-an-neuen-Rundfunkgebuehren-2235537.html

Media reports on the approval of the introduction of a universal broadcasting charge by the Swiss Ständerat

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