[CH] More flexibility for regional radio and TV stations

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Patrice Aubry
RTS Radio Télévision Suisse, Geneva

The Federal Council has approved a partial revision of the legislation on radio and television broadcasting (Ordonnance sur la Radio et la Télévision - ORTV), relaxing the conditions applicable to regional broadcasters. This will take effect on 1 January 2015. The Swiss Government's purpose, in approving the revision, is to support the transition of local radio stations to DAB+ digital technology. Thus, those broadcasters transmitting using DAB+ can be released from the obligation to broadcast using OUC technology. This will avoid imposing on the broadcasters concerned the cost of substantial financial investment in the renewal of OUC installations which are now dilapidated.

The revised order also abolishes the obligation for some local radio and television stations to broadcast each day a window of programmes directed at each region in the area they cover. This obligation only applied to those stations broadcasting to an area covering several cantons not served by other local radio and television stations; its aim was to ensure that local news was included in the supra-cantonal service. This obligation has now been abolished, so that the broadcasters concerned can be allowed greater flexibility: although they will still need to supply regional news services, they will now be able to choose whether to continue to offer separate programme windows or to incorporate regional news in the main programme. This move should allow the broadcasters to make substantial savings, while supplying the public with fuller news coverage.

The new order also relaxes the obligations incumbent on broadcasters of television programmes regarding the promotion of the Swiss cinema industry and the adaptation of broadcasts for the hard of hearing and the visually impaired. Whereas until now the broadcasters were subject to these obligations as soon as their annual operating costs exceeded 200 000 Swiss francs, this threshold has now been raised to 1 million Swiss francs, so that the smallest broadcasters can be exempted. The cost of determining and collecting the "encouragement tax" in favour of the Swiss cinema industry in fact took up a disproportionate amount of its yield. The losses in the promotion of Swiss cinema films should be minimal. Moreover, the associations defending the interests of the hard of hearing and the visually impaired would like, above all, the broadcasts of the Swiss national broadcasting company, Société Suisse de Radiodiffusion et Télévision, and those of the other major Swiss television channels to be adapted, so that the exemption of small broadcasters will only have a marginal effect.

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Lastly, the Federal Council has decided not to introduce hybrid television (HbbTV) as an associated service (i.e. a telecommunication service forming a functional unit with a television programme or necessary to be able to use the programme). This possibility had given rise to lively controversy because of the substantial investment that implementation would have involved. The obligation to broadcast associated services based on HbbTV technology has therefore been withdrawn from the revised order and will be examined more thoroughly.

Ordonnance sur la radio et la télévision (ORTV), modifications du 5 novembre 2014

http://www.bakom.admin.ch/dokumentation/gesetzgebung/00909/04667/index.html?lang=fr

Amendments made to broadcasting legislation on 5 November 2014

Press Release, "More flexibility for regional radio and TV stations", 5 November 2014

http://www.admin.ch/aktuell/00089/index.html?lang=en&msg-id=55099

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