[CH] Increase in proportion of licence fee allocated to local radio stations and television channels

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On 14 June 2015 the Swiss population approved a change in the Federal Law on Radio and Television (LRTV) with a view to introducing a new system of collecting the licence fee (see IRIS 2015-7/5). The purpose of this revision of the legislation was to replace the former licence fee, based on possession of a radio or television, by an audiovisual licence fee now payable by all households and certain companies. The audiovisual licence fee makes it possible to adapt the legal framework to technological developments, since radio and television programmes can now be received almost anywhere at any time, particularly by using a mobile phone, tablet, or PC. Moreover, 92% of Swiss homes and nearly all businesses have Internet access.

The result of the introduction of the new fee system is a significant drop in the amount paid by most households: since financing is assured by a larger number of people, the price of the new licence fee has fallen from CHF 462 to about CHF 400 per household per year. For businesses, the fee is graduated according to turnover; businesses with an annual turnover of less than CHF 500 000, however, are exempt (this represents nearly 75% of Swiss businesses).

The major part of the radio and television licence fee is handed over to the Swiss National Radio and Television Broadcasting Corporation (Société Suisse de Radiodiffusion et Télévision - SSR). A further 4-6% of the yield of the licence fee is allocated to the 21 local radio stations and 13 local television channels that fulfil a public-service mandate. A proportion of the licence fee may also be paid to local broadcasters whose radio or television programmes cover political, economic and social reality, and contribute to the cultural life of the region in which they are broadcast. A further proportion of the licence fee may also be allocated to those radio channels that broadcast additional programmes on a not-for-profit basis in urban areas.

The new collection system also makes it possible to improve the economic situation of those local radio stations and television channels with a public-service mandate. Previously, the proportion of the licence fee allocated to them amounted to a total of CHF 54 million annually; they may now receive up to an extra CHF 27 million and receive better support for the initial and continuous training of their staff, and for digitising their programmes.

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On 25 May 2016, on the basis of these new provisions, the Federal Council decided to allocate more financial resources to local radio stations and local television channels, increasing from 4 to 5% the proportion of the licence fee allocated to them; this represents an additional CHF 13.5 million per year. In all, these broadcasters will now receive a total of CHF 67.5 million. On 15 August 2016, the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communication (DETEC) laid down the proportions allocated to each of the beneficiary radio stations and television channels. The payments will be made retroactively from 1 July 2016.

Loi fédérale sur la radio et la télévision (LRTV)

https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/20001794/index.html

Federal law on radio and television (LRTV)

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