[FI] Decree on financial support for news and current affairs television content

IRIS 2017-10:1/14

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Finland supports public-interest television news programs. The supplementary State budget for 2017 had a separate EUR 1 million allocated for the purpose, whereas the budget for next year contains double that amount. The support aims at safeguarding pluralism in news production and securing alternative news sources in linear TV as well as boosting the competitiveness of news and current affairs activity. The state aid covers both the costs of carrying out regular activity and project costs, with criteria and conditions laid down in a new Government Decree on supporting news and current affairs programmes on public interest channels (657/2017). The Decree entered into force on 4 October 2017 and shall remain in force until the end of 2019. The objective is to secure alternative news sources and promote pluralism. In addition, the Decree aims at incentivising the maintenance, widening, or start of news production, as well as securing the nationwide availability of public interest channels.

Under the terms of the Decree, the Ministry of Transport and Communications grants aid on the basis of applications. In Section 3 (which covers “definitions”), the Decree refers to (linear) television broadcasting, while public interest channels correspond to television activity subject to a licence, pursuant to Article 26 of the Information Society Code (917/2014; ISC) (see IRIS 2015-3/11). The aid cannot be granted to operators that rely mainly on public funding. As defined for the purposes of the Decree, news and current affair programmes cover content such as regular news coverage, societal and political talk shows, and morning shows, as well as individual programmes such as election coverage. Section 5 prescribes the different types of aid, referring to services of general economic interest aid, and production support in the form of general aid pursuant to Section 5(2) of the Act on Discretionary Government Transfers (688/2001 (ADGT), and start-up or development support in the form of special aid pursuant to Article 5(3)(4) of ADGT. Support covers Finnish or Swedish editorial material produced or commissioned by the beneficiary, while the conditions include a fixed-term service obligation vested in the beneficiary and a programming licence for public interest television. The minimum requirements for the amount and frequency of news and current affairs programmes are fifteen hours a week, three times a day for eligible production costs and three and a half hours a week for start-up or development. The net costs of service provision may be supported up to a maximum of 25% and the start-up of new or the widening of existing regular

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activity by a maximum of 50%. In total, the aid may amount to EUR 2 million annually per beneficiary; annual reporting is required.

The reform draws from the report (LVM 3/2017) of a working group set up by Ministry of Transport and Communications last year to assess the funding and future of commercial television news services. The working group noted the crucial role of linear television, despite technology neutrality, and the importance to pluralism of free-to-air commercial television news production.

Valtioneuvoston asetus yleisen edun kanavien uutis- ja ajankohtaistoiminnan tukemisesta (657/2017)

http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2017/20170657

Government Decree to support the news and current affairs of public interest channels, 28 September 2017

Moniarvoinen uutistoiminta vaatii tekoja. Kaupallisen television uutistoimintaa tarkastelevan työryhmän raportti (Liikenne- ja viestintäministeriö, Raportit ja selvitykset 3/2017)

https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/79303/Raportit%20ja%20selvitykset%203-2017.pdf?sequence=1

Pluralistic news service requires actions. Report of the working group on commercial television news services (Ministry of Transport and Communications, Reports 3/2017), 1 March 2017

Yleisen edun kanavien uutis- ja ajankohtaistoiminnan tukimalli vahvistettiin

https://www.lvm.fi/-/yleisen-edun-kanavien-uutis-ja-ajankohtaistoiminnan-tukimalli-vahvistettiin-952947

The model for supporting public interest news and current affairs activity was established, 28 September 2017

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