[EE] Broadcasting Bill

IRIS 1997-7:1/21

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A Broadcasting Bill has been submitted to the Parliament of the Republic of Estonia; at present the 1994 Broadcasting Act is still in force.

The main differences between the two lie in the extension of the provisions concerning advertising. Thus in future advertising time may not exceed 15% of daily programme time (at present 20%), and in any one hour no more than 12 minutes of advertising may be broadcast. The scope for broadcasting direct sale offers will in future be limited to a maximum of 3 hours daily (limited at present to one hour).

A further change involves the special provisions governing advertising for alcohol. The present blanket prohibition on advertising alcohol will in future only apply to alcohol of over 40% proof, whereas advertising for alcohol under 40% proof will be permitted under specifically detailed conditions.

The Bill also contains a new provision regulating election advertising for political parties (Art.23). The Bill also differs from the present Broadcasting Act in its regulations on the allocation of broadcasting licences to private broadcasters (Chapter 4). The draft refers to just 2 categories for all broadcasting licences: local and national, whereas at present there are 5 categories; in addition to the two mentioned, there are also regional, international and time-limited licences.

A further innovation in the draft is the creation of a media supervisory authority as a controlling body. Unlike the present Broadcasting Act, the Bill contains no provisions on public-sector broadcasting. This should be covered by separate legislation. The National Broadcasting Bill covers the creation of a national Estonian broadcasting organisation on 1 January 1998 by combining Estonian Television and Estonian Radio. The Bill sets out in detail the obligation to issue a mandate (Art.3) as well as the duties and aims of the public-sector body (Articles 4 to 9). Articles 10 to 15 cover the rights and obligations of the national broadcasting organisation. The new national broadcasting organisation is to have a Council and a Board (Articles 16 to 23). It will be financed by State subsidies, advertising, sponsoring and other sources (Art.26, para.3). The amount of the State subsidies is set out in detail in Article 27.

Both Bills should go through the Estonian Parliament in the autumn.

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Broadcasting Bill and National Broadcasting Bill

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