[CY] Amendments for harmonising the Law on Public Service Media and the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation

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The House of Representatives amended the law on public service media (PSM) - the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (RIK) Law, so that, among other things, it is better harmonised with the *acquis communautaire*. Amendments were made on the basis, among other considerations, of observations in the framework of the EU Pilot project. They relate to a variety of issues, such as the spectrum of services offered, membership of the corporation's governing council, commercial messages, the protection of minors and the powers of the Cyprus Radio Television Authority over the PSM.

The main provisions of the amending law are as follows:

The number of members of the corporation's governing council is set to no more than nine, instead of seven, with the quorum requiring the presence of four members plus the chairperson.

The spectrum of services offered has been extended to include Internet and digital services and "any other services and programmes of interest to the public".

The provision that exempted isolated advertising or teleshopping messages from the general rule of being "readily recognisable and distinguishable from editorial content" has been corrected; the screening of isolated messages must be the exception, not exempted from the general rule.

Bulletins related to the environment are included in programmes (weather forecasts, stock exchange bulletins, etc.) that may receive sponsorship.

The prohibition of the advertising of and teleshopping messages related to medicinal products has been extended to medical treatment.

RIK has been granted the right to make a request to receive material on major events for which other AVMS providers have the exclusive rights.

The prohibition of audiovisual commercial communications likely to harm human dignity, promote discrimination on the basis of racist and other criteria or promote anti-social behaviour has been extended in order to protect minors; the relevant

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provision of the AVMS Directive of 2010 in Article 9.1.(g) has been incorporated into the law.

More provisions aim at protecting children participating in any kind of broadcasts by requiring their parents' or tutors' consent. Also, the employment of children in activities or programmes, in whatever capacity, requires the child's free participation, in compliance with employment and other relevant laws. The child's refusal to continue should lead to the interruption of his/her participation.

The powers of the Radio Television Authority over RIK have been further specified so that the regulator monitors the compliance of the PSM with all the provisions of the AVMS Directive that are incorporated in the law governing how the corporation functions.

A new special provision allows the corporation to have deposits of up to 10% of its budget specific to the provision of public service in order to compensate for fluctuating income or expenses or emerging needs and extraordinary activities. The use of these funds should be duly justified and in compliance with the laws on state aid.

This is the first time the PSM law has been amended since the incorporation of the provisions of the AVMS Directive into this law in December 2010.

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