

[DE] Television Signal Transmission Act Passed

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The act on the use of standards for the transmission of television signals - the Television Signal Transmission Act (Gesetz über die Anwendung von Normen für die Übertragung von Fernsehsignalen - Fernsehsignalübertragungs-Gesetz - FÜG) - came into force on 25 November 1997, incorporating Directive 95/47/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union of 24 October 1995 on the use of standards for the transmission of television signals (the TV Standards Directive - see IRIS 1996-2: 5) into national law. The rules embodied in the new Act largely coincide with those laid down in the Directive.

The Act accordingly makes 16:9 the standard format for wide-screen TV services and lays down technical requirements for the corresponding digital transmission systems, which must comply with European standards. Fully digitalised television services must use a transmission system approved by a recognised European standards body.

The Act also contains important regulations on digital television services and the right of access to services. Pay-TV service providers must give all programme providers equal, non-discriminatory access to their systems. The Act lays down technical standards for connection to other elements in a digital television service, particularly additional decoders and digital receivers. Wherever manufactured, so-called set-top boxes must be capable of decoding coded signals in a manner consistent with the current state of technology on the common European market. They must also be capable of reproducing uncoded signals. The Act covers legal aspects of competition too, containing regulations on equal access to the new technologies, with particular reference to the reception of digital television services accessible via decoder, and to licensing of the access technologies.

A conciliation body will be set up to resolve disputes.

