[DE] 23rd KEF report confirms broadcasting fee until 2024 and defines needs-based funding

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Christina Etteldorf
Institute of European Media Law

In its 23rd report, published on 18 February 2022, the *Kommission zur Ermittlung des Finanzbedarfs der Rundfunkanstalten* (Commission for Determining the Financial Requirements of Broadcasters – KEF) stated that Germany's public broadcasters would receive the funding they needed if the public broadcasting fee was raised to EUR 18.36 per month for the 2021 to 2024 funding period. This adjustment had been recommended in the KEF's 22nd report on 1 January 2021 and implemented by the *Bundesverfassungsgericht* (Federal Constitutional Court) in a decision of 20 July 2021.

The KEF comprises 16 independent experts from a variety of professional backgrounds, who are appointed for a five-year term by the Minister-Presidents of the 16 German *Bundesländer*. It is responsible for assessing the funding requirements of the German public service broadcasters (ARD, ZDF, Deutschlandradio and ARTE) and reporting to the *Land* governments on the financial situation every two years, as well as submitting a recommendation on the size of the public broadcasting fee, which the *Land* governments can only reject under certain circumstances. The KEF therefore plays an important role in the process of fixing the broadcasting fee (funding requirements are submitted by the broadcasters and analysed by the KEF, before the fee is decided by the *Land* parliaments), which is subsequently collected in the form of a household-based charge. As a rule, the KEF alternates between drafting reports recommending the size of the fee and interim reports. The 23rd report is an interim report, which reviews the assumptions and findings of the 22nd report and records any changes that have occurred since its publication.

In essence, the 23rd report confirms the findings of the 22nd report, although it notes additional funding requirements, totalling EUR 139.2 million (0.4% of total anticipated expenditure), resulting from amended income and expenditure figures. The shortfall of around EUR 224.3 million, caused by the delayed implementation of the broadcasting fee increase (see IRIS 2021-8/18), also needs to be covered. Additional funds of around EUR 540.1 million are available. Compared with the figures submitted by ARD, ZDF and Deutschlandradio, the KEF has reduced the financial requirements for the 2021 to 2024 funding period by EUR 1.5779 billion. This figure is made up of EUR 924.8 million of expenditure cuts, EUR 623.1 million of increased income and EUR 30 million of capital

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amendments. As a result, the KEF has set the total requirement for the 2021 to 2024 funding period at EUR 38.7622 billion, comprising EUR 27.6518 billion for ARD, EUR 10.0619 billion for ZDF and EUR 1.0484 billion for Deutschlandradio. Compared with the total funding requirement of EUR 36.3136 billion based on actual figures for the 2017 to 2020 period, this represents an increase of EUR 2.4486 billion or 6.7% (1.6% per year).

The report also focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the funding of public service broadcasting which, along with a lack of clarity over future inflation rates, is causing the greatest uncertainty in the current funding period. Just like all other companies and organisations, the consequences of the pandemic are affecting public broadcasters both directly and indirectly. In their submissions for the 23rd report, the public broadcasters had therefore taken into account the early noticeable effects of the pandemic and requested additional funding of EUR 597 million for the 2020 to 2024 period as a result of higher programming expenditure (extra industrial safety and hygiene measures, pandemic-related delays and interruptions to programme production, etc.) and a fall in revenue. The KEF took these additional COVID-related expenses into account as far as possible. However, they were largely offset by reduced funding requirements in other areas and additional sources of income. Overall, over both funding periods, the documented increases and reductions in expenditure more or less balanced each other out across the various spending categories. The KEF will review the situation again in its 24th report, based on the information available at the time.

23. KEF-Bericht

https://kef-online.de/de/presse/pressemitteilungen0/news/News/detail/kef-bestaetigt-rundfunkbeitrag-von-1836-eur-bis-2024/

23rd KEF report

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