[BE] The Reform of Regulatory Bodies within the Flemish Community Approved by the Flemish Parliament

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On 3 December, the Flemish Parliament voted in the new decree aimed at reorganising the Flemish Media Council and which also allows for the setting up of a Flemish Media Commission. The Flemish Government's Bill (see IRIS 1997-10 : 12) was approved by Parliament with just a few amendments.

Setting aside the regulatory power, which is not related to the audio-visual regulatory process and which remains the province of Parliament and the Government, everything else within the audio-visual sphere will come under the Media Council in its role as independent authority. The Council will be made up of 3 members, including a judge, who will act as Chairman. Civil servants from the Ministry of the Flemish Community will make up the Council staff. There will, therefore, as from now be a single body to handle authorisations, supervision, approvals and sanctions within the audio-visual sector. The sole exception will be the Flemish Council for Disputes for radio and television. The Council for Disputes will rule on all individual disputes that crop up following the application of provisions concerning either non-discrimination in Flemish radio and television programmes , or journalistic ethics and the impartiality of new programmes. The other bodies, such as the Council for Local Radios and the Flemish Council for Advertising and Sponsoring will be axed, while the role of the Flemish Media Council will be reduced to an advisory capacity either with regard to media policy or for the preparation of draft Bills.

Before the Media Commission is up and running, the Flemish Government still has to set out the procedures to be implemented with regard to approvals and sanctions. The decree stipulates that in any case, the principles of appeal, of a full hearing, of reasoned decisions and advertising will be upheld. A lot will depend on how the Government will be organising the Commission and what kind of staff and logistics means the Commission will be given. During the parliamentary debates, the Minister for Media Affairs, Mr. Eric van Rompuy, stressed the fact that the current reform represented a revolution in media policy within the Flemish community.

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Decreet betreffende het Vlaams Commissariaat voor de Media en de Vlaamse Mediaraad, St., Vl. Parl, 1996-97, nr. 742, 3 December 1997

Statutory instrument aimed at reorganising the Flemish Media Council and which also allows for the setting up of a Flemish Media Commission. St., Vl. Parl, 1996-97, nr. 742, 3 December 1997

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