

Communications Authority's revised Television and Radio Codes of Practice take effect upon gazettal

The following is issued on behalf of the Communications Authority:

The Communications Authority (CA) published in the Gazette today (December 15) the revised Television and Radio Codes of Practice on Programme and Advertising Standards (CoPs). The revisions including relaxation of relevant regulatory requirements and the introduction of specific requirements for the implementation of and giving effect to the National Security Law (NSL), took immediate effect upon gazettal.

"The CA has been sparing no efforts in facilitating the sustainable development of the broadcasting industry and it recognises the challenging business environment faced by licensees in light of the competition from online media. On the whole, the latest revisions have timely provided relevant relaxation to the regulatory regime of the broadcasting industry under the CoPs in light of the development of the society and the market. The revised CoPs provide a more flexible and conducive operating environment for the broadcasting industry and have struck an appropriate balance between facilitating the operation of the licensees and protecting the interests of the community at large, enabling the traditional broadcasting sector to develop in a sustainable way so as to provide the public with quality broadcasting services. The relaxations also help licensees strengthen their financial position by creating new revenue-generating channels, thereby achieving sustainable development," a spokesman for the CA said. A summary of the revisions to the CoPs is at [Appendix](#).

Meanwhile, in order to clearly spell out the important responsibility of the broadcasting industry in safeguarding national security, the CA has stipulated in the CoPs specific requirements for broadcasting licensees to safeguard national security in broadcasting their programmes.

The spokesman stressed that licensees have the duty and obligation all along to safeguard national security and ensure that their programming contents comply with the relevant requirements. The CA included the specific requirements in the CoPs aims to provide licensees with a better understanding of the requirements of the NSL, thereby ensuring that they would abide by the law in their provision of broadcasting services.

Apart from the above-mentioned revisions, the CA has in recent years implemented a number of facilitating measures to encourage the development of the traditional broadcasting sector, including:

*relaxing in July 2018 the regulation of indirect advertising, thereby allowing licensees to broadcast product placements in programmes. This

enabled licensees to broaden their sources of advertising income;

*lifting in January and March 2020 respectively the requirements for free TV licensees to broadcast educational television programmes and the programmes of Radio Television Hong Kong;

*relaxing in September 2020 the regulations of real property advertisements, sponsorship of live and related sports events programmes, and broadcast hours of mature programmes;

*revising in February 2021 the relevant guidelines to give effect to the relaxation measures introduced by the Government through amendments to the Broadcasting Ordinance and Telecommunications Ordinance, viz. relaxation of the "cross-media ownership restrictions" and "foreign control restrictions", as well as removal of the "requirement of a licensee being a non-subsidiary company", thereby providing greater flexibility to licensees' business operations; and

*implementing the decisions of the Chief Executive in Council in February 2023 in the mid-term review of the free TV and sound broadcasting licences which refined the programme requirements (e.g. relaxing the restriction of broadcasting non-English content on English channels, reducing the required broadcast hours of children's programmes, consolidating the categories of positive programme, etc.), thereby reducing the compliance costs for the licensees.

The CA will continue to monitor and keep pace with market changes and introduce timely facilitating measures whenever appropriate to foster the development of the broadcasting industry.

The CA embarked on the review of the CoPs upon completion of the mid-term review of the free TV and sound broadcasting licences in February 2023, and conducted a public consultation exercise from July 17 to August 16, 2023. The proposed revisions to the CoPs have received majority support from the public and the broadcasting licensees. A summary of the views received during the public consultation is available on the [CA's website](#).