

The act on subtitling is approved in Finland

The Finnish Parliament has approved the act on subtitling law last June 2010 and the President of Finland signed the act 27 August 2010. Law will be valid from 1 July 2011 and there are obligations for the TV broadcasting companies providing services to the people who benefits from the subtitles or audio description. Obligations concern both public TV channel and commercial TV channels.

Sport programs, children programs and music performances are unfortunately out of obligations. The committee of communications of the Finnish Parliament left amendment that there are reasons to make more study about subtitling on children programs and its` influences. As time goes by based on comprehensive facts of study, the Finnish parliament may debate further needs adding obligations to take into account children programs, too.

According to up-dated act, the Finnish Government will make legislative decree and it includes quotas for everyone tv-channels and quotas are meant to increase every each year. It is estimated that decree (by Finnish Government) may happen between autumn 2010 –winter 2011. Drafted decree proposal is shown, that public channel should provide subtitled programs 100 percent until year 2016 and commercial channels 35-50 percent until year 2016. Between those years, quotas are supposed to increase every single year. This is only drafted proposal and details are unsolved. It will be clear when the Finnish Government has made all needed on decree preparations and how these actions will be monitored. Anyway, the legal framework is accepted and legislative decree is more exact what actions tv-channels are supposed to do and what are exact subtitling quotas.

The Finnish Federation of the Hard of Hearing (FFHOH) emphasized many times, on European level Finland is behind of European leading countries such as the Great Britain, the Netherlands and Sweden regarding to subtitling legislation and actions. There are signs that examples are collected mainly before mentioned countries and there legislation framework are acted as model to the Finnish subtitling legislation.

Unfortunately obligations don` t concern children programs, sport programs and music performances. At end of lobby work last spring and summer, FFHOH tried actively to lobby children programs under obligation but we didn` t succeed but the Finnish Parliament left amendments and left “gate door” open. In the future, this is FFHOH` s goal to get children programs subtitling under legislation, too.

The FFHOH has lobbied actively last 10 years and this is the one of greatest milestones in our history, decision is historical. Generally we are satisfied with this positive news and this is huge step forward to building up towards more accessible TV in Finland! We wish that this political lobby work encourages European HOH- federations/associations.

This work won` t be ended now. Next following things are remain what we have to keep in our minds: for example how to monitor subtitling quality when volumes will be increased, we have demanded more subtitled WEB-tv programs because a part of TV-viewers are moved to WEB-tv platform and so on.

If you are interested to get known more details about long time subtitling lobby work, please contact me by e-mail!

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