

Proposed Research Outline

Public Service Broadcasting in Selected Places

1. Background

1.1 At a special meeting on 25 January 2006, the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting (Panel) requested the Research and Library Services Division (RLSD) to conduct a research on public service broadcasting in selected places. The research serves to provide reference for the Panel's deliberation on public service broadcasting in Hong Kong. The Panel aims to publish its own report, to which the *Committee on Review of Public Service Broadcasting in Hong Kong* can refer before concluding its review probably in October 2006. The *Committee on Review of Public Service Broadcasting in Hong Kong* is set up by the Government with a view to making recommendations on the structure, funding, governance, management, programming, monitoring and accountability of the public broadcaster.

2. Proposed places to be studied

2.1 In many developed places, public service broadcasting seeks to provide universal access to a wide range of programmes that inform, educate and entertain the general public. Models of public service broadcasting are diverse in these places, particularly in terms of the financing of the public service broadcaster(s).

2.2 The proposed study will examine public service broadcasting in the following places:

- (a) Hong Kong;
- (b) Canada;
- (c) Germany;
- (d) the United Kingdom (UK); and
- (e) the United States (US).

2.3 In Hong Kong, Radio Television Hong Kong is the sole publicly-funded public service broadcaster. It is a government department and funded by the general revenue.

2.4 In Canada, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is established as a crown corporation to operate national public broadcasting in the country. It is financed mainly through public funds, supplemented by revenue from advertising and other sources.

2.5 In Germany, ARD (Association of Public Broadcasting Corporations of Germany) and ZDF (The Second German Television) are the national public service broadcasters. ARD is a joint organization of regional public broadcasting corporations in Germany, while ZDF operates as an independent non-profit-making corporation under the authority of all federal states of Germany. Both ARD and ZDF are financed mainly by licence fees paid monthly by everyone who possesses a serviceable radio or television set, irrespective of whether the set is actually used.

2.6 In the UK, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Channel 4 are the national public service broadcasters. The principal means of BBC's funding is through television licence fees. In contrast, Channel 4 is financed entirely by commercial activities, principally through the sale of advertising time.

2.7 There is no national public service broadcaster in the US. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting is established as a statutory funding organization to provide financial support to local public television and radio stations, which are mostly members of the Public Broadcasting Service and the National Public Radio.

3. Research outline

3.1 RLSD proposes the following outline for the study:

Part 1 — Introduction

Part 2 — Hong Kong

Part 3 — Canada

Part 4 — Germany

Part 5 — The United Kingdom

Part 6 — The United States

Part 7 — Summary of findings

3.2 Parts 2 to 6 discuss the national public service broadcaster(s)/statutory funding organization in Hong Kong, Canada, Germany, the UK and the US in terms of the following aspects:

- (a) background of the national public service broadcaster(s)/statutory funding organization, including its public service mandate, role and services provided;
- (b) regulatory framework – governing legislation/legal documents and the regulatory authority;
- (c) editorial independence;
- (d) sources of funding;
- (e) corporate governance;
- (f) accountability – the role of the legislature in and other institutional arrangements for monitoring the performance of the national public service broadcaster(s)/statutory funding organization;
- (g) channels catering for minority and diverse audience and reflecting alternative viewpoints;
- (h) distinctiveness of the national public service broadcaster(s) from commercial broadcasters; and
- (i) review of the national public service broadcaster(s)/statutory funding organization, including its development amid the advent of new technologies.

4. Completion date

4.1 RLSD proposes to complete the research report by early April 2006.

Research and Library Services Division
Legislative Council Secretariat
8 February 2006