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BROADCASTING REGULATOR

Q: Please elaborate on the bodies which regulate broadcasting bodies in countries like USA, UK, Australia

Shantanu Dutta, Broadcast Consultant, Kolkata

Ans.: To accommodate new services and the evolving marketplace, many countries are modifying their policy-making and regulatory frameworks and institutions addressing the phenomenon of convergence of the telecom and broadcasting industries. One of the ways this has been achieved is by merging different regulatory authorities for telecom and broadcasting into one regulatory body. Large economies around the world like the USA, UK, Australia, European Union, etc. have established the converged regulators who are empowered and made responsible for overseeing the complete electronic communication space which includes telecommunication, broadcasting, media, and cyberspace. They have a common body that authorizes or provides licenses for both telecommunications and broadcast services. The international developments in the licensing regimes and regulation with respect to convergence in different countries is deliberated in this section

USA

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Communication Act of 1934 (as amended) deals with the regulation of telegraph, telephone, and radio communications in great detail. The Act provides for regulation in almost all aspects of the communications and broadcasting industry. The FCC is further divided into seven separate bureaus that process applications, filing of licenses, complaints, and making policies, etc.

UK
The UK communication industry is regulated by The Office of Communications (Ofcom), having duties in television, radio, telecommunications, and wireless communications services. The Communications Act 2003 (CA 2003) is the primary source of communication legislation and regulation in the UK that regulates the provision of electronic communication services as well as broadcasting services. The Broadcasting Standards Commission, Independent Television Commission, Office of Telecommunications, Radio Authority, and Radio-communications Authority merged their 16 regulatory duties under Ofcom in 2002. Ofcom provides licenses for TV broadcast, radio communications, radio broadcast, spectrum, etc.

AUSTRALIA
The Australian Broadcasting Authority and the Australian Communications Authority were integrated in 2005 to become the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). ACMA is a converged regulator, created to oversee the convergence of telecommunications, broadcasting, radio communications and the internet. The key responsibilities of the ACMA include:

- licensing and regulating telecommunications carriers, carriage service providers and content service providers.
- licensing and regulating RF spectrum.
- regulating television and radio broadcasting, including content regulation.

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