[NL] Dutch Media Authority Takes Tougher Stance Against Public Channels' Ties with Sponsors

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Commissariaat voor de Media (the Dutch Media Authority), which oversees the rules formulated in the Dutch Media Act as well as the regulations based on the act, has fined TROS, one of the public broadcasting channels, for having one of their television series sponsored by two major insurance companies.

The themes of each episode of the series were directly connected with the themes of the subsequent commercials. The editorial content of the series and the accompanying commercials had been attuned to such a degree that the commercials had more impact than they would have had, if they had been broadcast without this programme. The parent company of both insurance companies was involved in the planning of the series, in editing the episodes and in the selection of commercials.

The Dutch Media Authority has commenced similar proceedings against AVRO, another public broadcasting channel. AVRO is threatened with a 200.000 guilder fine for linking part of its activities to the beer brewery Heineken . In a show called `Heineken Night of the Proms', the Heineken logo was prominently shown 150 times, for relatively long periods of time. AVRO and Heineken are accused of having made agreements in conflict with the most important principles of the Media Act, i.e. non-commerciality and editorial independence. On 3 June 1999 AVRO will be given the opportunity to bring evidence to the contrary.

According to one of the high-ranking officials of the Dutch Media Authority, the cases against TROS and AVRO show that sponsorship rules for public broadcasting organisations need to be made more strict.

Commissariaat pakt verwevenheid publieke omroepen met sponsors aan.

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