[CH] Teleclub Banned from Using Own Set-Top Box in Switzerland

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The set-top box developed for the decoding of the Teleclub channel, the so-called "d-box", is likely to discriminate against the digital distribution of other pay-TV stations and to restrict the public's free choice of programmes. Only an open set-top box and use of the internationally recognised coding system Multicrypt enables the public to receive a variety of different coded channels using the same set-top box, thanks to its open interface. These were the conclusions of the Swiss Department for the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communication (UVEK) in a decision of 8 November 1999.

In future, the broadcaster Teleclub AG plans to distribute its pay-TV channel in Switzerland in digital form, which means special equipment will be needed to receive it. A set-top box, which converts the digital signal into an analogue signal which the television set can understand, is required. This box can also be used to decipher coded pay-TV channels and uses a special navigation system to search for such channels. All this technology threatens the diversity of opinion in broadcasting: at the end of the day, whoever controls the set-top box can decide which channels are made available to the public under what conditions. The technical characteristics of a set-top box must also therefore take into account the need for media diversity and openness.

The d-box, developed in Germany, was to be used to decode the Teleclub channel. However, in the UVEK's opinion, this set-top box did not meet the above-mentioned criteria since it only understood a single encryption system. Viewers equipped with a d-box would therefore have to buy a second set-top box to receive channels that used other coding systems unless other pay-TV broadcasters were legally able to obtain the d-box code. The UVEK therefore called for an open set-top box using the internationally recognised coding system Multicrypt, which enables the public to receive a variety of different coded channels, thanks to its open interface.

Verfügung des Eidg. Departement für Umwelt, Verkehr, Energie und Kommunikation (UVEK) vom 8. November 1999 (nicht rechtskräftig).

Order of the Swiss Department for the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communication (UVEK), 8 November 1999 (which has no legal force).

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