[BE] RTBF Pulls Out of Canal+ Belgique

IRIS 2000-8:1/7

François Jongen
Catholic University of Louvain, Avocat (lawyer)

The RTBF has been a shareholder in Canal+ Belgique ever since its launch in 1989. Indeed it was a requirement that all pay television companies were to allow the RTBF (either directly or through one of its subsidiaries) a capital holding of at least 26% or a blocking minority holding.

At the end of 1999 it was announced that the Defi Group, one of the other Belgian shareholders in Canal+ Belgique, had sold its holding in the channel. The RTBF was then tempted to sell its holding at a comparable price in order to make extremely useful capital gains.

In May 2000, Canal+ Benelux BV acquired the 333 163 shares in Canal+ Belgique held by the RTBF and the 698 441 shares in the company held by the RMB (an advertising body owned by the RTBF) for an estimated total price of BEF 832 000 000 (almost EUR 21 000 000). In order to allow this sale to go through without raising any difficulties for Canal+, Article 19(1)(4) of the Decree of 17 July 1987 on audiovisual matters, which required the RTBF to have a holding in pay-television channels, was repealed by a decree of 5 July 2000 which came into force on 25 July 2000.

The money still has to be allocated. Claiming its status as an autonomous undertaking, the RTBF would like to have the use of these resources for itself. However, arguing that it is actually paying the money, the government has already announced that part of the amount is to be allocated to offsetting the deficit of the French-speaking Community in the form of a reduction of the allocation to the RTBF on renewing its management contract, which is scheduled for 2001.

Décret du 5 juillet 2000, Moniteur belge du 25 juillet 2000.

Decree of 5 July 2000, published in the Moniteur belge (official gazette) dated 25 July 2000.

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026