[DE] T-Online an bild.de Joint Venture Authorised by Cartels Office

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On 8 March 2002, the Bundeskartellamt (Federal Cartels Office) authorised the venture subject to three conditions being met. Contrary to the original plans, the joint venture itself may not market Internet access as, according to the Cartels Office, this would strengthen the dominant position held by T-Online. Secondly, Internet users must be able to access the portal and view and download paid content via access providers other than TOnline. Furthermore, billing for paid content exclusively through T-Online is prohibited; users must be offered at least one alternative billing system of other providers. Therefore, access to content provided by the joint venture, including paid content, should be available to users who are not T-Online customers. Users would not therefore be obliged to subscribe to T-Online merely on account of attractive content offered by Bild.T-Online. In the opinion of the Cartels Office, the merger would not lead to the creation or strengthening of a dominant position in the paid content market (which is still in the development stage) if these conditions were met.

Should the practical implementation of the project deviate from these preconditions, the authorisation will not be effective. Consequently, putting the merger into effect would be a violation of the original prohibition. Moreover, such an administrative offence could be punished by an administrative fine.

Pressemitteilung des Bundeskartellamtes vom 8. März 2002

http://www.bundeskartellamt.de/08_03_2002.html

Press release of the Federal Cartels Office of 8 March 2002

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