[NL] Proposal for a Revision of the Public Broadcasting System by 2008

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In June 2005, the Dutch Cabinet announced its point of view regarding the future of the Dutch public broadcasting system, in a provisional draft entitled " *Met het oog op morgen* " ("Focusing on Tomorrow"). The Cabinet wishes to drastically revise the public broadcasting system by 2008 (see IRIS 2005-5: 17 and IRIS 2005-9: 17).The ambitions expressed in the provisional draft have now been converted into a law proposal put forward by the Secretary of State for Education, Culture and Science. In February, the proposal was approved by the council of ministers. It has since been submitted to the *Raad van State* (Council of State) for an opinion. If all goes according to plan, the law proposal and the opinion of the *Raad van State* will be presented to the Dutch Parliament this spring.

The proposed changes for the public broadcasting system have caused commotion in the broadcasting sector. According to the Cabinet, the public broadcasting organisations should focus on three typically public functions: the news (including sports); opinion and social debate; and culture, education and other information. The entertainment function will be limited to meaningful entertainment (i.e entertainment with well-defined purposes). The programming should be clearer and tailored to viewers' needs.

In the new structure, The Board of Directors will be responsible for the broadcasting organisations for performing in accordance with the three functions, and will oversee the allocation of funds and broadcasting time to each. The news must continue to be presented objectively and represent different points of view, also, public service broadcasting should equally be a forum for different opinions emanating from civil society. The broadcasting organisations will receive a fixed amount of money for opinion-making programs, and receive a guarantee that the programs will be broadcast.

The Cabinet wishes to adapt the tasks and structure of the public broadcasting organisations to recent digital developments. Radio, television, internet and mobile telephony should merge and interact to attract younger viewers. In order to protect the youngest viewers, there will no longer be commercial breaks during children's programs' broadcasting time. According to the Cabinet, as of 2008, the organisations should be able to engage in commercial activities. This way, they will be challenged to become creative entrepreneurs which, it is hoped, will lead to improved quality programming.

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“Ministerraad stemt in met wetsvoorstel publieke omroep 2008”, 10/02/2006

http://rechtennieuws.nl/6644/ministerraad-stemt-in-met-wetsvoorstel-publieke-omroep-2008.html

Council of Ministers press release of 10 February 2006

“Met het oog op morgen”, 24/06/2005

http://www.nieuwsbank.nl/_payment/order/97126592/inp/2005/06/24/R409.htm

"*Focusing on tomorrow*", *provisional draft of 24 June 2005*

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