European Commission: Commitments on Sale of Football Rights Legally Binding

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The European Commission has issued a decision that makes commitments from the UK Football Association Premier League concerning media rights legally binding. The commitments will remain in force until 30 June 2013, covering the next two rounds of bidding.

The Commission had raised concerns about the joint selling of rights by the Premier League, which might deprive media operators and British football fans of choice, and lead to higher prices and reduced innovation. However, the Commission also recognised that there are benefits to joint selling for football fans and media operators as well as for the clubs. The Premier League submitted proposals to the Commission which would ensure that no single broadcaster would be allowed to buy all of the packages of live match rights from 2007 onwards. After consultation, the Commission accepted these.

The agreed commitments provide for more rights, including television, mobile and internet rights, to be made available and ensure that the rights are sold in an open and competitive bidding process subject to scrutiny by an independent trustee. Live television rights will be sold in six packages which will be smaller and more balanced than previously; each will include 23 matches. No one buyer will be able to buy more than five of these packages. The commitments also enhance the scope for individual clubs to exploit rights that are not sold by the Premier League or used by the purchaser. Extracts of matches shown live on television will also be made available in real time on mobile phones.

"Commission makes commitments from FA Premier League legally binding", Press Release IP/06/356, 22 March 2006

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