[NL] Media Authority Issues Warnings to Two Public Broadcasting Organisations

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Dutch public broadcasting organisations VARA and TROS have both received official warnings from the Commissariaat voor de Media (Media Authority). The consumer programmes of these two networks were found to have cooperated with providers of Internet sites that offer a scheme to compare different insurance policies enabling consumers to make an informed choice. In doing so, they were in breach of the Media Act which prohibits public broadcasting organisations to serve the profit-making activities of third parties.

The Internet site of VARA's consumer programme Kassa provided consumers with information relating to health insurance and a simplified free version of the scheme to compare insurance policies offered by another site: Verzekeringssite (Insurance Site). In addition, a hyperlink on the Kassa -site offered consumers the possibility to request an offer from Verzekeringssite.

According to the Media Authority, the comparison scheme itself is a good service for a public consumer programme to offer to its viewers. In this case, however, the public broadcasting organisation violated the prohibition to engage in commercial activities. VARA generated increased profits for Verzekeringssite and offered it a possibility to sell its products within the public realm. VARA should also have included clauses upholding the commercial prohibition it must observe in the contract with Verzekeringssite, but failed to do so.

The Media Authority understands that public broadcasting organisations are still experimenting with the Internet to explore more efficient ways to support and enhance their programmes. This prompted the media Authority to issue a warning rather than a fine.

TROS received a warning for similar reasons. Their consumer programme Radar also unduly benefited a commercial Internet site (Independer) offering software that would compare insurance companies.

Waarschuwing voor VARA en TROS wegens 'het dienstbaar zijn aan het maken van winst door derden'

http://www.cvdm.nl/content.jsp?objectid=822

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Warning for VARA and TROS for 'serving profit-making activities of third parties', press release of 2 May 2006

Waarschuwingsbrief Commissariaat voor de Media voor VARA, 27 april 2006

http://www.cvdm.nl/dsresource?objectid=4502&type=org

Warning letter of the Commissariaat voor de Media to VARA, 27 April 2006

Waarschuwingsbrief Commissariaat voor de Media voor Tros, 27 april 2006

http://www.cvdm.nl/dsresource?objectid=4504&type=org

Warning letter of the Commissariaat voor de Media to TROS, 27 April 2006

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