European Commission: Investigation into Dutch sports channel

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European Commissioner Karel van Miert (Competition, DG IV) announced on 31 May 1996 that the European Commission will investigate whether the exclusive licensing agreement between the Dutch Football Association (KNVB) and the new sports channel Sport 7 (see IRIS 1996-4 : 14) violates articles 85 en 86 of the EC-treaty. At a meeting of the Broadcast Business Club in Hilversum, the Netherlands, Van Miert said that the duration on the licence, 7 years, was the prime subject of investigation. The channel, owned by a joint venture of Philips, ING Bank, production company Endemol and the KNVB, plans to start broadcasting on 18 August of this year.

In the mean time, the Dutch Secretary for Economic Affairs announced that he will test the concentration of force on the pay-TV market between KPN, Philips and NetHold against the Dutch competition law (Wet economische mededinging). The three companies, who together control the Dutch market for pay-tv, plan to jointly start providing digital pay-TV this summer. The Secretary will investigate whether this plan leads to 'a structural economical position of power', now that the three companies control the services and the distribution in this field.

Anticipating the consultation by the Dutch Secretary, Commissioner Van Miert said on 31 May that, in principle, he had no objections against these plans, as long as the used decoders were also accessible for other market players. Earlier the European Commission intervened in a German joint venture between Deutsche Telekom, Kirch and Bertelsmann.

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