[NL] Recommendations on the future of the public broadcasting system

IRIS 1996-7:1/21

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On 26 June 1996 an ad hoc commission installed by the Government of the Netherlands to advise on the future of the Dutch public broadcasting system (the Commissie-Ververs) published its conclusions and recommendations. The commission concludes that, in order for the public broadcasting system to survive, a radical transformation is required. The report suggests to change to a segmented structure; one segment consisting of the existing broadcasters in the public broadcasting system, the other segment being a central broadcasting organisation (a successor to the Dutch Broadcasting Corporation, NOS). To become part of the first segment, the public broadcasters would have to participate in 'broadcaster elections'. A broadcaster, who would need to have a minimum of 100.000 to 150.000 members, would only get a licence if he could acquire at least 10 to 15 per cent of the votes cast. The recommendation thus detaches the membership of a public broadcaster from the subscription to its programme guide. At present, all those who subscribe to a programme guide of a broadcaster in the public broadcasting system are automatically members of the broadcasting organisation.

The chosen public broadcasters would be assigned 60 per cent of the total of available broadcasting time, to be distributed according to the results of the elections. The other 40 per cent would be allocated to the central broadcasting organisation. The two segments would be required to coordinate their broadcasting activities. Furthermore, the report recommends the establishment of a Programme Council (Programmaraad) that would decide on channel differentiation. At the level of the public broadcasting system, the Commission recommends maintaining the current 3 television and 5 radio channels that broadcast nationwide, but concludes that at least an amount of 75 to 100 million guilders must be saved.

After the summer recess the Cabinet and the Dutch political parties will react on the recommendations of the Commission. Information on law related policy developments which may have legal consequences but of which no documents or other texts are available yet.

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Terug naar het publiek, Rapport van de commissie Publieke Omroep, Den Haag, 26.06.1996

Recommendations on the future of the public broadcasting system, Den Haag, 26 June 1996.

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