[GB] No Investigation into Project Canvas

IRIS 2011-1:1/32

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Ofcom, the UK communications regulator, has announced that it will not open an investigation into 'Project Canvas' following complaints on competition grounds by Virgin Media and IPVision. 'Project Canvas' (see IRIS 2010-2/22 and IRIS 2010-7/23) is a joint venture between the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Five, BT and Arqiva to offer digital terrestrial channels and internet-delivered TV services via a set-top box connected to TV sets. It involves creating technical standards which can be used to deliver content via a single box using a branded user interface to be known as YouView.

Competitors had claimed that the Project would incentivise its partners to withhold content from competing platforms; that the technical standards had not been developed openly and were not available for use by those outside the venture; that use of the YouView brand was tied to the specified user interface and electronic programme guide; and that the venture is likely to restrict competition between TV platforms. However, Ofcom decided that it is premature to undertake an investigation at this stage because YouView will bring benefits to views and consumers which will need to be balanced against any harm to competition and any such harm would depend on how the market develops. There was little evidence at this stage that the partners would withhold content and a number of technical standards had already been made available to the industry. Any limitation on the choice of user interfaces must be balanced against existing choice in the market, the possibility of new entry and the potential benefits to consumers of a common "look and feel".

Ofcom will, however, continue to monitor developments, particularly on YouView's approach to sharing standards and its effects on content syndication and may reconsider later whether to open an investigation.

Ofcom, "No investigation into Project Canvas", News Release, 19 October 2010

http://media.ofcom.org.uk/2010/10/19/no-investigation-into-project-canvas/

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