[NL] Ownership limitations on cable television networks

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The Dutch Minister of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, Ms Annemarie Jorritsma, who is responsible for telecommunications, has written a letter to Mr Van Miert, member of the European Commission, on cross-ownership rules for cable television networks (in the USA referred to as `cable systems'). In her letter, the minister requests the Commissioner to look into the possibility to restrict the ownership of cable television networks/systems (`alternative telecommunications infrastructures') by dominant telecommunications operators (read: PTT's). In several countries of Europe the public telecommunications networks and cable television networks (systems) are both operated or controlled by PTT's (or the PTT has some kind of other direct relationship). This situation of `double ownership' hampers the development of cable television networks into interactive networks, capable to offer other services such as telephony and interactive video services (pay-per-view, etc). The reason behind the letter is the fact that the minister recently concluded an agreement with the Dutch PTT to divest its cable interests. Through its cable company Casema, PTT controlls about a quater of the Dutch cable television networks. The European Commission drafted a directive two years ago which contained provisions to limit the ownership of cable television networks (systems). However, opposition by Members States blocked the necessary support for specific cross-ownership rules and a directive with a much more restricted scope was adopted (Commission Directive 95/51/EC of 18 October 1995 amending directive 90/388/EEC with regard to the abolition of the use of cable television networks for the provision of already liberalized telecommunication services, see IRIS 1996-2: 7).

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Letter of the minister of Transport, Public Works and Water Management to the European Commission (Mr Van Miert), 29 January 1997.

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