[NL] Amendments to Media Act concerning regional broadcasting

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On 15 March 2016, the Senate passed the new amendments to the Mediawet (Media Act) in order to reform the regional broadcasting system. The State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science, Sander Dekker, wanted to transfer the administrative and financial responsibility of the regional broadcasters to the central government, realise a reduction of EUR 17 million in the budget of the regional broadcasters, and set up a single unified organisation responsible for public broadcasting at a regional level. Additional reforms regarding the national broadcaster are contained in an additional bill, which the State Secretary aims to present to Parliament before the summer recess.

The new amendments to the Media Act, which have taken effect with its publication on 30 March 2016, create a legal basis for a new organisation, Regionale Publieke Omroep (Regional Public Broadcasters, RPO). The RPO will be granted an exclusive “concession” (concessie) by the Minister for Education, Culture and Science for ten years for the realisation of public broadcasting on a regional level, and will act as a single unified organisation responsible for public broadcasting at a regional level. In order to obtain this concession the RPO needs to submit a “concession policy plan” to the Minister beforehand and resubmit another one for review after five years. The plan must contain a detailed report on the ways in which the RPO wishes to shape public broadcasting on a regional level in the upcoming years. The plan should cover both quantitative and qualitative goals. It must specify the content of regional programmes in general terms, the intended audience of programmes, and the means the RPO needs to achieve these goals. It must also specify some organisational requirements, such as the nature and number of channels required and the frequencies needed to achieve this.

The concession policy plan will be made available to the public and the Minister is legally obliged to ask the Commissariaat voor de Media (the Dutch Media Authority, CvdM) and the Raad voor Cultuur (Council for Culture) for advice about the plan. Based on the plan, the Minister and the RPO come to a “performance agreement”, which contains the quantitative and qualitative goals the RPO should achieve and the possible sanctions if it fails to do so. It is explicitly stated that the performance agreement does not relate to the content of specific regional programming, but is directed at the programming in general. As stated in the introduction, the RPO will be financially dependent on the central government and

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needs to submit a detailed budget to the Minister and the CvdM every year.

Wet van 16 maart 2016 tot wijziging van de Mediawet 2008 in verband met het toekomstbestendig maken van de publieke mediadienst

https://www.eerstekamer.nl/behandeling/20160330/publicatie_wet_3/document3/f=/vk2sf5wyjkz8.pdf

Act of 16 March 2016 to amend the Media Act 2008 to make Public Broadcasting future proof

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