[DE] Cable - the Way Ahead

IRIS 1997-6:1/26

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On 20 May 1997, Telekom boss Ron Sommer invited fifty leading politicians and media representatives to discuss the future of cable TV at a round table. The meeting had been preceded by protracted wrangling over cable allocation (see IRIS 1997-3: 14).

Telekom, which has an almost total monopoly of the German cable network (in the USA referred to as "cable system"), has announced that it wishes in future, not merely to carry programmes, but to handle them commercially as well. Thus it wants to look after digital TV subscribers itself, get involved in arranging programme packages and selling them, and take charge of the necessary decoding technology. If the cable network is expanded for conventional television services, it also wants a say in deciding which stations are - and are not - to get the extra channels. So far, channel allocation has been solely a matter for the Land media authorities, which means that the Länder will have to change the law to meet Telekom 's wishes.

The meeting agreed to take a decision within four to eight weeks on technical and legal aspects of the new digital TV, which Telekom wants to launch at the International Radio and Television Exhibition in Berlin at the end of August. Within three weeks, Telekom also undertook to send television stations and companies a "schedule of charges" for digital transmission of their programmes via cable.

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