[DE] Debate on Sport Coverage Rights

IRIS 1997-7:1/27

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Following the acceptance by the European Parliament in plenary of the outcome of negotiations between the Parliament and the Council of Minsters on the new EC Directive on `Television without Frontiers', the Upper House of the German Parliament (Bundesrat) has decided that Germany will abstain from voting on its final adoption by the Council of Ministers. In this way the Länder (the federal states) are demonstrating their constitutional authority over the media to both the Council and the Federal Government. Indeed they are of the opinion that the EC, at the very least as regards specific regulations contained in the Directive, has no authority (see IRIS 1997-4: 15). In terms of media policy, the Conference of SPD (Socialist Party) parliamentary leaders at national and regional levels called for a State convention to ensure that television has free access to major sports events. The parliamentary leaders felt that the top sports organisations should also be required to justify their social responsibility in the matter of allocating television broadcasting rights.

On this point, the President of FIFA (the international football federation) stressed in the debate on pay-television and television rights for coverage of the world championships in 2002 and 2006 that FIFA wanted above all to reach the largest possible number of television viewers in all the Länder.

For broadcasting Champions League matches in the coming European Cup season, the German television broadcasters RTL and Premiere (pay-TV) have come up with an arrangement; while RTL broadcasts its choice of either a German championship match or a match involving the Champions League titleholders, Premiere will broadcast the other match at the same time, encrypted. At the end of the match RTL will then show highlights of the other match.

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