[DE] No Licence Fee for Use of Internet

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Representatives of ARD and ZDF have agreed with a working group of broadcasting experts from the Länder that no fee should be levied for the time being on personal computers with Internet connection.

The public service broadcasters had been pressing for such a fee because broadcasting programmes can also be received partly via Internet connections. ARD had suggested applying a pro rata reduction to the fee for using PCs to receive broadcasts via the Internet in a business context.

The group of experts has now reached agreement with ARD and ZDF against charging PCs with an Internet connection for as long as the present Agreement between the Federal States on Licence Fees (Gebührenstaatsvertrag) remains in force, which is until the end of the year 2000.

Before agreement was reached there had been protests from the main associations in the economy as well as from the media and communications industries. In a letter to all the Minister-Presidents of the Länder , they appealed to the Minister-Presidents to not yield to the public service broadcasters' urging to charge this fee, which until now is only levied on TV sets. They believe that an "access tax" of this kind would be contrary to regional policy initiatives aimed at making companies more familiar with multimedia. The services offered via Internet had nothing to do with classic broadcasting, although it was increasingly frequent for broadcasters to also offer their programmes via Internet.

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