[ES] The European Commission Abandons Proceedings

IRIS 1997-10:1/26

Frédéric Pinard
European Audiovisual Observatory

The Spanish law on digital television (Ley 17/11997 of 3 May 1997) has had a chequered history, both at national and community level, and which has been closely followed in IRIS (see IRIS 1997-9: 9, IRIS 1997-8: 11, IRIS 1997-5: 12 and IRIS 1996-10: 15). A quick recap of the basic facts is needed. The main point of contention centred around the choice of a single decoding system for deciphering television signals.

Canal Satélite and Via Digital, the two operators in the market, each use a different kind of de-coder, simulcrypt for the former and multicrypt for the latter. The first version of the law opted for the multicrypt system and immediately ran up against community provisions on competition and the free circulation of goods by ostensibly favouring one of the two operators. An infringement procedure was subsequently lodged before the European Commission. The Spanish authorities, without waiting for the outcome of the proceedings, decided to amend the law upon the basis of a Real Decreto-Ley of 13 September (see IRIS 1997-9: 9). With the amended law no longer giving top priority to the multicrypt system, the Commission feels that equal treatment is now being given to all of the operators in the market and therefore the infringement procedure lodged last July need no longer go ahead and is therefore being abandoned. The Commission does, however, intend to keep a watchful eye on the application of the law.

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026