

Europe



European Convention of Human Rights

In 2009, the Dutch government retreated on its former position of making Smart Meters compulsory in all homes.

The Dutch Minister of Economic Affairs, Maria van der Hoeven, had intended that refusing installation of a Smart Meter would be punishable by either a €17,000 (\$23,053) fine or six months in prison. She now backs the installation of such units being voluntary (metering.com, 2009).

Their proposed mandatory rollout of Smart Meters was opposed by privacy watchdog groups and consumer organisations, including Consumentenbond (the Netherlands' main consumer organisation) which commissioned a report into the matter by the University of Tilburg (Cuipers & Koops 2008).

That report concluded that Smart Meters could give away sensitive information that might fall into the hands of third parties (including police and insurance companies) on consumers' energy usage habits, including when individuals' leave and return to their homes (which could be particularly useful to burglars).

It also stated that the insights these intelligent monitoring devices would provide into living patterns and relationships could affect individuals' freedom to do as they please within their own homes and therefore be in breach of the European Convention of Human Rights.

References

Cuipers, C. & Koops, B.J. (2008), Het wetsvoorstel 'slimme meters': een privacytoets op basis van art. 8 EVRM, Universiteit van Tilburg.

metering.com (2009), Smart meters not to be compulsory in Netherlands, <http://www.metering.com/node/15062>