

Publication: Mobile News
Date: 7th April 2009
Publication Type: Online
Circulation: N/A

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Vodafone goes Dutch with Lyca

April 7, 2009

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Lycamobile already works with T-Mobile in the Netherlands, where it first launched as a provider of cheap international mobile calls to ethnic communities in 2006.

It has around 1.3 million prepay customers with T-Mobile in the Netherlands. It launches a Vodafone-backed service later this month, following approval for the venture from Dutch regulator OPTA.

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Lycamobile is considered the most aggressive MVNO in the market, and told Mobile News ahead of launch last summer it would consider multi-partner agreements in certain markets.

It is unprecedented for an MVNO operation to run multiple wholesale deals in the same market, and could antagonise its UK network partner, Orange. It could also put rival ethnic market MVNO Lebara Mobile on alert in the UK, where it already partners with Vodafone.

Vodafone's contract with Lebara Mobile is likely to preclude a UK deal with Lycamobile in the UK, however.

Lycamobile confirmed it has pledged €5 million to marketing the new Vodafone partnership.

Lycamobile SIM cards and top-ups will be available from over 30,000 retail outlets in the Netherlands, including Albert Heijn, Media Markt, Lekkerland, Debitel, Jumbo Supermarkten, Shell and Esso.

Since its 2006 launch in the Netherlands, Lycamobile has started services in Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland and the UK. It plans to launch in a further six markets this year. Lycamobile chief executive Milind Kangle (pictured) said: "We are delighted to have signed this partnership deal with Vodafone Netherlands, and chose it for its dedicated partnership approach to the MVNO market and its superior network coverage and quality.

"Thanks to the full MVNO technical architecture Lycamobile has developed, we are able to provide an enhanced low-cost, high-quality mobile service to our Dutch customers. It's all about adding value and supplying a premium product without any compromises."

Vodafone general manager of wholesale Gary Bhomer said: "This is a big win for Vodafone. Lycamobile has an extremely strong user base in the Netherlands and we look forward to working with Lycamobile to migrate that base, and to build further on its success to date."