

Universal Invests In Dutch Download Platform

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By Werner Schlosser, Hilversum

Universal Music Netherlands has made an unspecified investment in Dutch digital music firm Target Media.

The Netherlands media company Media & More Factory -- owned by Dutch media entrepreneur Erik de Zwart -- has also bought shares in Target Media Music Partners Holding. Both are minority holdings. The company, based in the Northern Dutch town of Huizen, claims to be responsible for a 15% share of the Netherlands' downloads market, behind iTunes with 80%.

Target Media offers music from Universal, Sony and EMI -- but not Warner Music -- and several independents, including Play It Again Sam, Roadrunner and Rough Trade Distribution, on downloadmusic.nl and acts as an aggregator for supplying third party sites which it also powers.

Exact details regarding the size of investment from Universal Music Netherlands and Media & More Factory have not been revealed, although TargetMedia president Paul van Rooij tells Billboard.biz that the three parties will invest a combined total of "over €1 million" (\$1.5 million) into the downloads business.

According to a statement from Universal Music Netherlands CEO Kees van der Hoeven, the deal shows "a rock solid trust in the technical and commercial qualities of partners TargetMedia and Media & More."

Calling the investment from Universal Music "fantastic news for the industry," Rooij went on to say that "many major initiatives in the Netherlands come from foreign companies-I'm proud we have achieved this collaboration as a Dutch company."

The entrance of Universal as a shareholder was "discussed honestly with all parties involved'," claims Van Rooij. "Everyone agreed we can't and won't treat Universal differently than any other label. [But] there is a mutual interest in developing a healthy digital market in the Netherlands."