

## V THE DIGITALIZATION PROCESS

It is commonplace to say that the digitalization in Serbia is late and that it is necessary to speed up all the activities to finalize it by June 17, 2015. In March, however, all activities on establishing the regulatory framework for the digitalization process were intensified. At the proposal of the Foreign and Domestic Trade and Telecommunications Ministry, the Government adopted in March the Decision on the Adoption of Amendments to the Strategy of Switchover from Analog to Digital Radio and Television Broadcasting in the Republic of Serbia, together with the Action Plan. According to the Ministry, the said amendments to the Strategy should enable the improvement of the regulatory framework necessary for the successful implementation of the digitalization process, as well as define the necessary steps in terms of raising the awareness of the citizens about the switchover to digital television broadcasting. They should also further elaborate on the testing of network parameters prior to the complete switch-off of the analog signal and switchover to digital TV signal. Compared to the previous plan, the Action Plan defines the activities of certain institutions in the continuation of the digitalization process more closely. Particularly encouraging is the participation of national broadcasters and electronic media associations in the procedure of adoption of the key regulatory document, which will define the switch-off of the analog signal and switch-on of the digital signal by allocation zones contained in the Switchover Plan. This has helped the recognition of the importance of the broadcasters, which are the most interested party for a smooth transition, without interruption of broadcasting. In addition, the Foreign and Domestic Trade and Telecommunications Ministry have announced the adoption of the Switchover Plan in June and that the public procurement of the necessary equipment will be launched in September. At the consultative meeting on the topic of digitalization, organized by the Foreign and Domestic Trade and Telecommunications Ministry and the OSCE Mission to Serbia on March 25, the representatives of the EC Delegation said that the EU was planning to complete the digitalization process in the Union itself by 2015. On the other hand, it was proposed that Serbia should use, for the purpose of testing the digital signal, the frequencies of TV Avala, which was stripped off of its broadcasting license by the RBA in December 2012. Such announcements are encouraging as to the continuation of the process, bearing in mind that, on one hand, the Switchover Plan is the key document for having a smooth digital switchover, while the use of TV Avala's frequencies will facilitate the switchover and reduce the risks of interruption of broadcasting. On March 21, RATEL started the public consultations about the Rulebook on the Amendments to the Rulebook on establishing a Plan on the Allocation of Frequencies/Locations for Terrestrial Analog FM and TV broadcasting stations for the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The Amendments were initiated with the objective of providing a regulatory basis for testing the digital signal, which corresponded to the efforts of



the Ministry and the Government. The key change lies in the fact that the frequencies formerly used by TV Avala have been committed for the needs of expanding the Initial Network for testing the digital TV signal. RATEL's Draft foresees that the Initial Network will be able to use a larger number of frequency channels, which will enable testing of the signal with greater strength than it has been the case until now.