

V MONITORING OF THE PRIVATIZATION AND DIGITALIZATION PROCESS

PRIVATIZATION

The privatization of state-owned media was stopped in late 2007, with the adoption of the Local Self-Government Law and the Law on the Capital City. These laws – contrary to the previously adopted provisions of the Public Information Law and the Broadcasting Law, which had provided for mandatory privatization – have allowed the municipalities and the City of Belgrade to establish media, namely to municipalities to establish TV and radio stations for the purpose of reporting on the language of ethnic minorities and to Belgrade for setting up television and radio stations, newspapers and other public information outlets without any limits.

At the same time, the economic crisis has created problems in a major number of formerly privatized media, which resulted in strikes over unpaid salaries and the termination of a number of privatization contracts, which is being used by opponents of privatization in public appearances as a proof that this process is destructive.

ANEM held on the 23rd and 24th of July two workshops dedicated to privatization and attended by the representatives of the Ministry of Culture, Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government. From the positions held by the present ministry representatives, it is visible that pressure applied by ANEM and other media associations, which insisted for more than one year that the privatization be continued, has yielded certain results and led to a certain adjustment of their positions. The Ministry of Culture has announced it would conduct a comparative analysis about the manner in which the issue of state-owned media had been solved in other European countries, as well as that, on the basis of the results of such analysis, the Ministry would propose the proper strategy in this area. The representative of Ministry for Human and Minority Rights said the Ministry would support the media privatization model allowing that the existing level of minority rights be sustained. The representative of the Ministry for State Administration and Local Self-Government indicated that the Ministry would not

oppose changes in the media that may be branded systemic and announced it was prepared to put the Local Self-Government Law and the Law on the Capital City in line with the legal media framework.

DIGITALIZATION

The Draft Strategy and Action Plan for the transition from analog to digital broadcasting of radio and television program in the Republic of Serbia, prepared by the Ministry for Telecommunications and Information Society, initiated on the 22nd of May 2009 a public debate on the process of digitalization. Serbia opted for switching off analog signal broadcasting on April 4th, 2012. MPEG-4 was chosen as the data compression method, while DVB-T2 will be the standard for broadcasting digital television signal.

ANEM participated in the public debate with proposals, which were coordinated by ANEM B92 with national broadcasters, TV Pink and TV Fox. The text of the Draft Strategy includes the following provisions:

- A place in multiplexes, in the moment when the analog broadcasting of television signal ceases, will be guaranteed only to broadcasters holding a valid broadcasting license;
- The said provisions guarantee an equal application of the same, non-discriminatory conditions regarding quality, accessibility and fees for all broadcasters by the future network operator, whereas the fees will be based on a cost-principle and exclusion of the possibility of the operators affecting the content of the program;
- The rights and the market position of operators holding valid licenses will be guaranteed;
- The provisions guarantee that no special simulcast fee will be charged;
- The provisions guarantee that service zones from the existing broadcasting licenses will be maintained;
- The provisions guarantee the supply of the same throughput for all programs in the scope of the multiplex;

The Strategy is pointing to the necessity to address the many regulatory challenges, namely:

- The manner and procedure of electing the operator of the digital broadcasting network;
- The manner of operating the multiplex and the conditions of the tender for multiplex operators;
- The manner and procedure of issuance of licenses for program content;
- Establishing the amount of the fees for broadcasting program;
- Adjusting the regulations aiming at protecting competition on the newly created digital television market;
- The regulatory framework on rights and obligations of the Public Broadcasting Service in the digitalization process;
- The conditions of distribution and use of the digital dividend.

Part of these issues will be handled by the working group established by the Ministry of Culture, which group is working on the amendments to the Broadcasting Law.