

V THE PROCESS OF DIGITALIZATION

Upon proposal of Ministry for telecommunications and information society, at the session held on 2 July 2009, the Government adopted Strategy for transfer from analog to digital broadcasting of radio and TV programs in the Republic of Serbia. 4 April 2012 was established as the date of full transfer to digital terrestrial broadcasting of TV program in the Republic of Serbia. The Action plan for implementation of the Strategy, which stipulates obligations of competent bodies in the process of digitalization and establishes deadlines for their implementation, is an integral part of the Strategy.

After the public debate process, the original text of the Draft strategy was modified to an extent, through adoption of corroborated opinions and proposals of representatives of the media industry, and submitted to the Government for adoption.

The Government was expected to pass another document together with the Strategy – the Decision to detach RTS from the broadcasting system and establish a new public company which would manage the national broadcasting infrastructure, under non-discriminatory conditions. It is supposed that the failure to pass this Decision may be explained by the request of RTS to be assigned a privileged position and continued free use of broadcasting infrastructure. Postponement of this decision points to the issue of whether the Strategy may be implemented in accordance with the deadlines defined by the Action plan. Separation of broadcasting equipment from the RTS system was already envisaged by the 2002 Law on broadcasting and 2005 Broadcasting development strategy.

The Strategy and Action plan may be downloaded [here](#)

VI THE PROCESS OF PRIVATISATION

Media privatization was not continued in the observed period. The competent Ministry of culture still has no suggestion on how to resolve this issue. There are no indications as to what is happening with the Strategy, which was announced for the whole media sector, and which would regulate this issue as well. Instead of this, in July, Law on national minority councils was included on the agenda of 11 session of the National Parliament after an emergency procedure. The Law was discussed into more detail in Chapter III of this Report, which discusses new regulations. Here, we would just like to emphasize that this Law also indicates that the authorities have still not reached a clear agreement or any concrete idea on the direction in which the media sector should

develop. The disputable Law was drafted by Ministry for human and minority rights. Its adoption would create additional confusion and disbalance on the media market.

In July it was noticed that certain non-privatized media, which requested this issue to be resolved, but in a different manner, became more active. Employees of the Novi Sad „Dnevnik Holding” resorted to a strike to demand, among other things, continuation of privatization which was disrupted three years ago. On the other hand, five regional radio and TV stations, founders of the „Kragujevac initiative” demand to be assigned the status of regional public services, believing that for them, this would be a proper way of completing media transition.

OPINION

For competent bodies, completion of privatization would have to be a priority task. Any further delay of this issue would additionally complicate the position of not only non-privatized, but all media in Serbia, due to different legal regimes valid for commercial media on the one hand, and public media on the other. Ministry of culture may resolve the issue of further media privatization in a very simple manner. It is in the competence of the Ministry to pass an act to regulate this procedure into more detail. Experiences gained in practice so far have showed good and bad sides of cases of privatization carried out so far, so that the poor solutions could be overcome by introducing appropriate amendments in the Rulebook regulating privatization. In order to complete the process of media transition and continue democratization of the society, it is necessary to establish equal conditions to all on the media market, which is not possible with a number of media outlets still in public ownership. The idea of regional public services, as an alternative to complete privatization, would call for establishment of stable and independent sources of financing, as well as guaranteed editorial independence from the centers of political power; the adversaries of privatization do not talk about this.