

V THE DIGITALIZATION PROCESS

Late November marked the first anniversary since the RTS started, on November 26, with the experimental digital broadcasting of its whole day culture and information program. The editor of this program Tatjana Citic said that the number of viewers was increasing and that the RTS might be expected to launch more new thematic programs upon the completion of the transition to digital broadcasting by April 2012. We hereby remind that other broadcasters, in particular members of ANEM and APRES, have repeatedly addressed various institutions, including the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Society, pointing out to the fact that RTS's digital broadcast was currently not in compliance with the provisions of the Broadcasting Law. That Law stipulates that RTS will be broadcasting its program on two networks only and stops short of mentioning the third one - the experimental digital network. The Broadcasting Law namely does not provide at all for the possibility of the public service to launch thematic channels. Furthermore, broadcasters have claimed that RTS's activities were contrary to the Digitalization Strategy adopted by the Government of the Republic of Serbia, since RTS was not broadcasting in the DVB-T2 standard that the Government opted for in its Strategy, but in the DVB-T standard.

VI THE PRIVATIZATION PROCESS

On November 5, 2009, at a meeting with the representatives of the Ministry of Culture in Nis, the representatives of several regional and city television stations from Serbia called for their quick transformation into regional public services. The representatives of the so-called Kragujevac Initiative, which is calling for a change of the status of regional public media and their transformation into regional public services, pointed to the failed privatization and the uncertain future of not-yet-privatized electronic media. "We are angry at the legislators, because the will of the citizens is being persistently ignored and 35.000 people signed a petition for the establishment of a regional public service in Nis alone," said Slavisa Popovic, the Director of the Niska Television. He stressed that the Kragujevac Initiative resulted in Belgrade obtaining, under the Law on the Capital City, the right to establish television and radio stations and that local self-governments were granted the same right in order to provide for reporting in the language of national minorities and maintain the achieved level of minority rights. At the same time, Popovic said that the said right was not granted to regional centers, which the Kragujevac Initiative had launched in the first place. The Director of RTV Kragujevac Jovana Marovic reminded that regional public services operated in several EU countries, such as Slovenia or the Netherlands. Deputy Culture Minister in charge

of the media Natasa Lesendric said that the working group for amending the Broadcasting Law was aware of the negative examples of privatization and that it would undertake polls so as to hear the citizens' opinion about the setting up of regional public services. In her words, the state will take due account of the majority opinion. However, one must observe that not a single report from the meeting between the representatives of the Kragujevac Initiative and the Ministry of Culture contains any concrete proposal that would answer the question how to ensure a stable source of funding of regional services, which would not be directly controlled by local authorities (which is currently the case since the said media are financed directly from the city budgets), as well as the question how to create systemic conditions for the independence of managing structures and staff of regional public media. At this time, namely, the media that are participating in the Kragujevac Initiative are organized as public state-owned companies, whose management is directly appointed by the councils of their founders - municipalities and cities.

The purpose of the provisions of the Broadcasting Law providing for mandatory privatization is precisely to prevent the misuses of public media by local power players. If privatization is to be avoided, one must first create systemic conditions for the editorial independence of regional public services, but also the need to maintain, or better to say create equal conditions for the survival of commercial broadcasting media at the local and regional level, since such conditions were not provided for in the existing model.