

V THE DIGITALIZATION PROCESS

At the already mentioned series of round tables, organized by OSCE in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia and the European Union Delegation in Serbia, with the support of the British Embassy in Belgrade –aimed to foster debate about the recently adopted Media Study, which would serve as a starting point for drafting the Media Strategy of the Republic of Serbia – journalists’ and media associations ANEM, NUNS, UNS, NDNV and Local Press presented their set of recommendations concerning the digitalization process. The associations insisted that the tasks and powers of the current working group for the supervision of the digitalization process needed to be more precisely defined. They also said that the working group should be supplemented by new, independent members and empowered so as to be able to react publicly, point to oversights and propose alternative solutions, aiming to have a successful digitalization process. The association insisted on a comprehensive information campaign about the digitalization process targeting all citizens, but also broadcasters. One of the requests was also that the decision on the allocation of the digital dividend be taken in a transparent procedure with the widest possible participation of the public. This procedure should take into account the public interest, both in terms of leaving enough frequency bands for broadcasting and allocating part of the revenue to be generated from the digital dividend for media funds and projects. One of the requests of the associations was related to the part of the digital dividend that would be designated for wireless broadband internet access. In their opinion, future operators that are allocated that spectrum should be required to establish the network in those parts of Serbia where broadband cable and ADSL penetration is the lowest.

VI THE PRIVATIZATION PROCESS

Explaining the positions voiced together with other journalists’ and media associations at the above mentioned round tables, the Association of Independent Electronic Media furnished to the Ministry of Culture, as yet another input for further development of the Media Strategy, an overview of the media privatization process with recommendations for further action in this area. The document (available only in Serbian) that is also posted on the ANEM website at

http://www.anem.org.rs/admin/download/files/_id_732/Privatizacija%20medija%20FV.pdf, includes the legal framework relevant for this sphere, including the regulations that have caused a suspension of privatizations, the analysis of the objections to the privatization that have been completed so far and provides recommendations as an alternative to those

contained in the Media Study, which provide for giving up privatization and transforming still-unprivatized public media into regional public service broadcasters. Among other things, the document proposes the following:

- Changing the provisions of the Law on Local Self-Government, the Law on the Capital City and the Law on Ethnic Minorities' National Councils, which – pertaining to media privatization – are not conformed to the Law on Public Information and the Broadcasting Law;
- Continuing with time-limited privatization of media with short deadlines, simultaneously with the setting up of an expert team in the Privatization Agency, which would include media professionals that would, together with the Ministry of Culture, through public consultations, separately and with media and journalists' associations, work on improving the privatization model so as to recognize the specificities of the media industry;
- Relaxing the provisions of the Broadcasting Law in the part concerning the ban on media concentration, in order to solve the problem of the unsustainable number of electronic media by measures that will encourage the aggregation and merger of electronic media, particularly at the local and regional level;
- Implementing effective state aid control mechanisms; and
- Regulating a system of transparent and non-discriminatory state co-financing of media projects and a system of state support for the development of the media sector.