

V THE DIGITALIZATION PROCESS

Although the Strategy for the Transition from Analog to Digital Radio and Television Broadcasting in the Republic of Serbia has set April 4, 2012 as the date of the total switchover to digital terrestrial television broadcasting in Serbia, which means that there is less than 18 months until the switchover is complete, most obligations provided for by the Action Plan accompanying the Strategy are still behind schedule. We remind that the defining of rights and obligations of commercial broadcasters in the digital switchover process – with the respect of the rights those broadcasters enjoy under the licenses expiring after the deadline for the switch-off of the analog signal, namely the adoption of the Rules for switchover to digital radio and television broadcasting and access to multiplex in terrestrial digital broadcasting – was to take place in the second quarter of 2010. In the meantime, although that time limit expired, the public hasn't even seen the draft of these Rules. The fourth quarter of 2010 was expected to see the issuance of decisions on amendments to the existing analog licenses, but these developments are also delayed. During the summer, the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Society announced several times that the Faculty of Electrical Engineering in Belgrade was working on a conceptual design of a distribution network, which was to be completed by mid-August. This was already behind of schedule relative to the Action Plan, which provided the completion of the conceptual design in the first quarter of 2010. Judging from publicly available information, the said design wasn't completed by the end of October. The Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Society had also announced that the drawing up of media plan for the promotion of digital television had been started. That media plan was supposed to be finished in September, but by the end of October, the public was yet to see any sign of it. These are only some of the activities that are seriously delayed. What particularly concerns the media is the fact that the obligations of commercial broadcasters in the digitalization process remain undefined, which means that media owners are unable to plan their operations, even in the short term.

VI THE PRIVATIZATION PROCESS

According to the information obtained from the Privatization Agency, the auction scheduled for October 29 for the sale of the public information media Radio Televizija Indjija was declared unsuccessful. The initial price on the auction was set at 3.361.000 RSD. The Agency announced a new auction to be held on December 10, as well as a new initial price of 2.263.000.00 RSD. We remind that Radio Televizija Indjija was one of the eight public companies included in the Report of the Executive Council of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina tabled in September 2007 to the State Administration and Local Self-Government Ministry. In that Report, the Vojvodina Executive Council called the Government of the Republic of Serbia to suspend the privatization process of the municipal media in Srbobran, Novi Becej, Bela Crkva, Indjija, Pancevo, Kikinda, Subotica and Stara Pazova, which are broadcasting in the languages of ethnic minorities. On a session held on December 27, 2007, the Government of the Republic of Serbia – pursuant to the said initiative – adopted a decision to suspend the privatization of radio and television stations and other electronic media broadcasting in the languages of ethnic minorities. Two days later, the Parliament adopted the Law on Local Self-Government, which enabled the municipalities to establish television and radio stations for the purpose of reporting in the languages of ethnic minorities officially used in the given municipality, as well as for reporting in the languages of ethnic minorities not in official use, when such use represents the attained level of minority rights. Both the report of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Law on Local Self-Government adopted after that report, as well as the Law on the Capital City adopted the same day, have practically led to the suspension of all privatizations in a period exceeding one year.