[AM] The evolution of audiovisual media regulation in Armenia: key changes and implications of the new Audiovisual Media Law

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The Republic of Armenia's Law on Audiovisual Media (Audiovisual Media Law), enacted on 16 July 2020, and effective from 7 August 2020, replaced the previous legislation, the Law on Television and Radio, which was passed on 9 October 2000. The decision to introduce the new law was prompted by advancements in the audiovisual media industry and the swift evolution of technology.

The Audiovisual Media Law introduces notable changes in the regulation of cable operators. Previously, licensing requirements for cable operators, governed by Article 50(2) of the Law on Television and Radio required the submission of a comprehensive business plan. However, with the new legislation (Article 47 of the Audiovisual Media Law), the need for a business plan has been eliminated, streamlining the licensing process for cable operators.

A significant addition under the new law is the concept of authorisation. As outlined in Article 3(1)(23) of the Audiovisual Media Law, the concept of authorisation is formulated as follows: "[A]uthorisation — issuance, by the state regulatory body, of a document granting the status of broadcaster to a natural or legal person". This provision introduces a distinct mechanism separate from traditional licensing, focusing on granting permission to broadcasters for the distribution of audiovisual media services. So far, the authorisation, unlike licensing that is issued on a competitive basis and which grants the right to broadcast in a public multiplex, shall be granted within ten days of submission of the application to the state regulatory body (Article 43(2) of the Audiovisual Media Law).

Additionally, for the first time, distributors, including cable operators, are brought under regulatory oversight, as stipulated in Articles 47, 48 and 54 of the Audiovisual Media Law. This regulatory framework aims to ensure compliance with the standards and guidelines set forth in the Audiovisual Media Law, safeguarding the integrity and quality of audiovisual media distribution. By subjecting distributors to regulatory scrutiny, the law seeks to protect the interests of consumers and stakeholders while adapting to the evolving landscape of the audiovisual media industry.

In summary, the Audiovisual Media Law of the Republic of Armenia, through Articles 43, 47 and 54, introduces significant changes in the licensing and

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regulation of cable operators, simplifying the licensing process, introducing the concept of authorisation, and regulating distributors for the first time. These amendments reflect the evolving needs of the industry and aim to enhance efficiency while maintaining compliance with established standards and regulations.

Law of the Republic of Armenia on Audiovisual Media

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