

[MK] the Macedonian Broadcasting Council Passed its First Year

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The Broadcasting Council of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is an independent regulatory body that represents the interests of the citizens in the broadcasting area. It was established by the Law on Broadcasting, which entered into force 8 May 1997, and it commenced its work on 5 September 1997. The Broadcasting Council is comprised of 9 members with different professional backgrounds, and it is charged with (I) discussing issues relating to broadcasting activity, (II) developing proposals for granting and rejecting concessions for broadcasting, (III) monitoring of the implementation of concession contracts, (IV) taking care of the implementation of the legal provisions relating to program production and broadcasting (V) proposing distribution of the funds from the broadcasting tax for the local public broadcasting companies and for projects of public interest, (VI) providing opinion and suggestions on broadcasting promotion and development (VII) performing other activities in the broadcasting area.

The application of the Law on Broadcasting and conducting of a transparent and expert procedure in the concession-granting process for broadcasting has been one of the first and most significant actions of the Council during the past year. After the completion of the concession-granting tender, for the time being, the private broadcasting sector in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is composed of: 53 local commercial television stations, 72 local radio stations and 3 commercial nation-wide networks (2 for TV and 1 for radio). Beside the private sector, broadcasting activity is also performed by the public broadcasting service in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, including: 3 Macedonian television channels, 3 Macedonian Radio channels, 29 local radio services and 7 local television services.

Immediately after the private broadcasting sector had been legalized, the Broadcasting Council started its activities relating to electronic media program monitoring. The first project of this kind was the monitoring of the electronic media coverage of the 1998 Parliamentary Elections in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. As the election coverage was the first experience of this kind for many new electronic media, the Broadcasting Council adopted Recommendations on the electronic media programming during parliamentary election time. In the development of the Recommendations as well as for the monitoring, the Council co-operated with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the International Center against CensorshipArticle

19 and the Washington Democratic Institute. Finally, research into listeners' and viewers' opinions regarding the reporting by the electronic media during the parliamentary elections is going through its final stage. The Broadcasting Council is about to finalise preparations relating to the cable television concession allocation tender that is scheduled for the second quarter of 1999. According to the Broadcasting law (Article 65), 30 to 50 concessions could be allocated for the whole national territory.

