[BA] The IMC Licensing Process is Coming to an End

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Dusan Babic
Media Analyst, Sarajevo

The Independent Media Commission (IMC) which commenced its work on 1 August 1998 (see IRIS 1998-10: 13), has published the Broadcasting Code of Practice (BCP) for radio and television in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The BCP sets out the rules and standards for content of domestic broadcast programmes. It shall promote the right of freedom of expression as envisaged by the European Convention on Human Rights while respecting minimum standards of decency, non-discrimination, fairness, and accuracy. The IMC will use the «Code » when considering complaints, or acting on information gathered through its own monitoring media performance unit. Furthermore, the BCP serves as a criterion when the IMC examines applications for licences the process of which has come to an end. The first February deadline as well as the extended deadline set for the end of April this year have passed. During the last months, the IMC had issued the so-called «Qualifications for Broadcast Licences» which is a short guidance paper consisting of only four paragraphs. These paragraphs introduce 1.) the policy of non-discrimination (that is, no discrimination on grounds such as ethnic identity, political, religious or cultural orientation); 2.) the exclusion of persons indicted for, or convicted of, major crimes (in brief, the IMC will not grant a licence to an individual serving a sentence imposed by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTFY) or an individual under indictment by the ICTFY); 3.) the qualifications of broadcast station management (any broadcaster must demonstrate a level of technical and managerial competence in accordance with generally accepted European practices, as well as the basic willingness and ability to comply with the IMC's BCP); 4.) the legal criteria for selecting applicants (licences will be granted to all organizations/media companies registered in B&H in accordance with relevant domestic legislation; the IMC reserves the authority to grant or deny a licence at its discretion).

According to the most recent data, the IMC has received 267 applications from existing broadcasters (the term «broadcaster» includes any radio or television station operating in the B&H territory whether it is licensed by the IMC or not), and 18 applications from newly emerging radio and television stations, i.e., those who are not yet operative. Thus, only about two or three of the existing broadcasters did not apply for a licence. So far the results of the IMC licensing process have not been released.

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