[SI] Changes to Media Act Adopted

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On 3 March 2004 the Slovenian government approved changes to the media act for first reading in the Parliament. It aims at the creation of conditions for media pluralism and the harmonisation of the sector with the acquis communautaire. The changes to the act were also necessary due to a new telecommunications bill.

The changes shall improve the system of approving applications for more than a 20-percent ownership stake in print media, in line with the goal of maintaining media pluralism.

The changes shall also enable the media to access public information and request access to non-public information from public persons, on the basis of the constitutional right to freedom of information. Such information must be given a media outlet providing there will be no violation of privacy. The changes provide more specific definitions of two areas, namely information of public interest as defined by the act on access to information and information that journalists can demand from state bodies. These changes were introduced because there is criticism regarding some recent cases of misuse on the part of state bodies, which refuse to publish the required information. In such cases, journalists were not protected by law, and no sanction was envisaged for persons who refused to share information of public interest. The amended media act therefore includes specific deadlines by which a state body has to reply as to whether it will provide the required information, and legal protection in procedural regard for journalists. Journalists shall be able to file a complaint if they are denied access to public information.

As far as the EU legislation is concerned, the act would be more specific about the implementation of regulations related to programme quotas for local TV broadcasters, in line with the Television without Frontiers directive. The amendments would also improve some provisions on independent TV and radio producers.

In addition, the changes will harmonise the media act with the new telecommunications bill in those parts dealing with permits for radio and TV broadcasting, which are issued by the Agencija za telekomunikacije, radiodifuzijo in posto Republike Slovenije (Agency for Telecommunications, Broadcasting and Post ATRP).

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Press release of the Government of 3 March 2004

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