[HU] Restructuring of Media Enterprises Ahead

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In accordance with the Radio and Television Act No. I/1996 (Broadcasting Act), one of the responsibilities of Országos Rádió és Televízió Testület (the national radio and television board - ORTT) is to ensure diversity of opinion in the media.

Pursuant to Chapter 8 (§§ 125, 126) of the Media Act No. I/1996, which lays down rules on media ownership, cross-ownership (in the sense of a controlling interest) of a daily with nationwide coverage and broadcasters (concerning the various grades of participation) is prohibited.

In late September ORTT announced to press representatives that according to current estimates, coverage by the regional commercial broadcaster Viasat3 could be assumed to extend to more than half of the population of Hungary. The programme broadcast by the firm, which is owned by the Viacom conglomerate, can be received works in other parts of the country. With the development and extension of the cable networks the technical range of several regional radio broadcasters has increased significantly. ORTT has therefore embarked on a general investigation to determine which firms must be considered in future as national broadcasters.

One of the factors relevant in the case of Viasat3 is the rule according to which at least 26 % of the shares in a national commercial broadcaster must be owned by Hungarian natural or legal persons, whereas 95 % of the shares in Viasat3 are currently held by the Swedish company MTG Broadcasting AB, which is part of the Modern Times Group (MTG). As regards ownership of a national daily newspaper, the free daily Metro is published by MTG Metro Gratis Kft, also part of the MTG Group.

ORTT hopes to have completed its study by the beginning of December 2004 and will then prepare its decision on the matter.

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