

[HU] Information on the new Hungarian radio and television law

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In IRIS 1996-1:14 it was reported that the Hungarian law on radio and television had been adopted by the Hungarian Parliament on 21.12.1995.

On 12.01.1996 the law was signed by the Hungarian President Arpad Göncz. The law, which came into force on 1.02.1996, introduces the dual system in Hungary, putting an end to the era of state-controlled broadcasting. In future the country's three public broadcasting stations (Hungarian Radio, Hungarian Television and Duna TV) will become the property of three public institutions and remain under their supervision. This will create a new organisational structure for public broadcasting previously unknown in this form.

The institutions' supervisory boards (committees) comprise 30 members. The institutions' executive boards each comprise 8 members, half being appointed by the parliamentary groups of the governing party, the other half jointly by the parliamentary groups of the opposition.

The chairmen of the executive boards will be selected by Parliament from the members of the executive boards on the basis of nomination by the parliamentary groups of the opposition.

In addition, radio and television stations will take the form of limited companies and will have to operate according to economic criteria, their budgets being restricted to broadcasting fees and revenue from advertising. A "national corporation for radio and television" (ORTT) has been set up as the highest media supervisory authority. It comprises 7 members, designated by the separate parties. The chairman is appointed jointly by the head of state and the head of the government. The supervisory authority allocates frequencies, controls the media economy, monitors programmes and receives complaints.

The law contains extensive anti-monopoly clauses to prevent media concentration in respect of private broadcasters. At least 26% of any broadcasting station must remain in Hungarian hands. Cross-ownership agreements between undertakings in the printed media and in the audiovisual industry are limited by holding restrictions. The law places an obligation of neutral reporting on private stations. To promote this requirement, there is provision for stations to be able to apply to a state programme service fund for financing work in the public interest.

