[BG] Second Reading Radio and Television Bill

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In May 1996 the Bulgarian Radio and Television Bill was introduced in Parliament for a second and final reading and it is expected to be adopted in the course of July.

The Bill declares the freedom of creation and distribution of radio and TV programmes, guarantees their independence from political and economic interference, and prohibits all forms of censorship. It provides for the establishment of a National Council for Radio and Television (NCRT) as a specialised and independent public entity. The NCRT will consist of 11 members, 7 of which will be nominated by Parliament in proportion to the membership of the parties represented therein, 2 will be nominated by the President, and 2 by the Prime Minister. The period of their mandate will be six years.

The NCRT will:

- monitor the activities of all radio and television broadcasters for compliance with the provisions of the new law and impose administrative sanctions in the case of non-compliance;

- advise the Government on applications for broadcasting licences by private radio and television broadcasters (the licences are granted by the Government under the Law on Licensing);

- appoint and dismiss members of the Management Boards, the Programme Councils, as well as the General Directors of Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) and Bulgarian National Television (BNT).

Every radio and television organisation will have the right to determine the contents and the duration of its programmes independently of public authorities, individuals, and organisations. A right of reply will be guaranteed and the rules for advertising and sponsorship will be brought in line with the provisions of the European Convention on Transfrontier Television.

Radio and television broadcasters will be required to reserve at least 15% of their broadcasting time (excluding the time appointed to advertising, news, sports events, games, and teletext services) for Bulgarian product. For BRT and BNT this will be 30%. At least 10% of the total annual broadcasting time will have to be

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filled with productions from independent producers.

The right to distribute radio and television programmes on Bulgarian territory can be granted to natural or legal persons with Bulgarian citizenship. Legal persons operating in a joint venture with foreign persons cannot own more than 49% of the capital in the company of a broadcast licensee.

Furthermore, a single person will not be allowed to directly or indirectly:

- distribute in a regional area more than one radio and one TV programme;

- distribute more than one radio or one television programme nationwide.

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Bill on Radio and Television.

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