

[BA] RAK Fines RTRS because of Unauthorised Digital Broadcasting

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The Communications Regulatory Agency (RAK) has fined the public broadcaster Radio Televizija Republike Srpske (RTRS) BAM 100,000 (about EUR 50,000) due to a violation of Article 32 para. 1 of the BiH Law on Communications because of unauthorised use of the frequency band via 61 UHF channel around the area of Banjaluka, the capital of the Republika Srpska.

On 12 December 2009 RTRS started its experimental digital terrestrial broadcasting under a regular programme schedule (DVB-T standard and MPEG 2 compression). On 14 December 2009 the RAK warned RTRS and ordered it to stop the unauthorised digital broadcasting but RTRS did not, thus violating Article 46 section 3 point c) of the Law on Communications.

In doing so RTRS also ignored the national Strategy of the Transition to Digital Broadcasting, which was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 17 June 2009. In the course of promoting its digital broadcasting RTRS stated that potential viewers were obliged to buy a „set-top box“. But this device will be practically useless after the introduction of a digital broadcasting system on countrywide level, which shall be completed by the end of 2012 and for which the implementation of the MPEG 4 standard is envisaged (see: IRIS 2009-3: 4).

The fine imposed by the RAK is the highest financial amount imposed on a broadcaster in the post-Dayton BiH and critics say it was inappropriate with regard to the violation in question. The RTRS management announced that it will not obey the decision but rather spend the money on additional improvements to digital broadcasting.

Meanwhile, RTRS stopped its digital broadcasting, but this had nothing to do with the RAK's order.

Authority's press release on the decision of 21 January 2010

<http://www.rak.ba/en/public-affairs/pressr/default.aspx?cid=5450>

