[RO] Open Letter to Unfreeze the Digital Switchover

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A number of Romanian associations, NGOs and companies from the telecommunications sector sent an open letter to the European Commission and the domestic authorities on 15 February 2011, requesting it to unfreeze the digital switchover in Romania (see IRIS 2009-9/26, IRIS 2010-3/34, IRIS 2010-7/32, IRIS 2010-9/35 and IRIS 2011-1/45).

They requested the revision of the Strategy of transition to digital television until the end of the first quarter of 2011 and to set 2013 as the deadline for finishing the transition. The Romanian Government decided in August 2010 to postpone for three years, until 2015, the digital switchover, arguing that providers had not enough time to adapt and that the population would not be able to buy the necessary equipment because of the economic crisis.

The authors of the open letter consider that the digital switchover, requested by the EC, will lead to the development of a new major television programme transmission platform, beyond cable and satellite. At the same time, the process will lead to the partial release of spectrum ("digital dividend"), which could be used for broadband Internet services and new technologies (4G), according to the European Commission’s recommendation.

The president of the signing Association for Digital Communications considers that, if the process were not unfrozen, it would become more and more difficult for Romania to fulfill its obligations to the European and international bodies with regard to closing down analogue transmission and to the adoption of the necessary legislation, in due time.

The letter complains that when the digital switchover was stopped and postponed, a competitive selection procedure for granting the first two digital multiplexes was underway.

The document was addressed to the European Commissioner Neelie Kroes and the Romanian Prime Minister, Ministerul Comunicaţiilor şi Societăţii Informaţionale (Ministry of Communications and Information Society), Autoritatea Naţională pentru Administrare şi Reglementare în Comunicaţii (National Authority for Administration and Regulation in Communications - ANCOM) and the Consiliul Naţional al Audiovizualului (National Council for Electronic Media - CNA).

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The transition to digital television will be restarted by a Government Decree, the Romanian Communications Minister declared in December 2010. At the same time the President of ANCOM estimated that the six Romanian digital television licences will be granted in 2011.

Scrisoare deschisă către autorităţi şi Comisia Europeană pentru deblocarea procesului de trecere la televiziunea digitală terestră în România; HotNews.ro, 15.02.2011

http://economie.hotnews.ro/stiri-telecom-8304545-scrisoare-deschisa-catre-autoritati-comisia-europeana-pentru-deblocarea-procesului-trecere-televiziunea-digitala-terestra-romania.htm

Open letter to the authorities and the European Commission

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