

[AL] Debates on Funding of Regulatory Authority and Public Broadcaster

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In several meetings of the Komisioni për Edukimin dhe Mjetet e Informimit Publik (Parliamentary Media Commission - KEMIP) in the course of December 2012, the discussions on the 2013 state budget for the electronic media regulatory authority Këshilli Kombëtar i Radios dhe Televizionit (National Council of Radio and Television - KKRT) and the public broadcaster Radio Televizioni Shqiptar (Albanian Radio and Television - RTSH) highlighted the existing problems in current methods of determining their respective funding.

According to Art. 11 of the Law no. 8410 (on Public and Private Radio and Television in the Republic of Albania), the funding for KKRT derives from five sources: (1) a proportion of the commercial broadcaster's licence fees, (2) revenues from processing the broadcast licence applications, (3) five per cent of the income tax paid by licensees, (4) state budget funding, and (5) donations. Since 2005 the KKRT has pursued the strategy of gradually achieving financial independence from the state budget and becoming self-sustaining. However, commercial broadcasters proved to be tardy in paying their dues. Hence, the KKRT representatives asked the KEMIP for state funding of ALL 83 million (circa EUR 595,000) for 2013. It is needed for a move to new premises, the establishment of a programme monitoring centre, and a call centre needed as support for the implementation of the strategy to the switchover to DTT (see IRIS 2012-7/6).

The RTSH, according to Art. 115 of the Law no. 8410, is funded from a variety of sources: the licence fees, contracts with third parties using RTSH properties and capacities, publication of video and audio productions, performance activities and public shows, advertisement and broadcasting of other paid messages, donations and sponsorships, the sale of RTSH programmes, and the state budget. Among these sources, the license fee is supposed to be the main income of RTSH. However, even though the licence fee is considered to be among the lowest in South Eastern Europe (see IRIS 2011-4/8), there are problems collecting this fee. Since the collection of the license fee is conducted via the electricity bill, the nation-wide problems with the payment of electricity bills in the country also affect the collection of the broadcasting licence fee. The RTSH General Director also pointed out that the cash flow has to improve. The electricity distribution company CEZ should forward the fee directly to RTSH in order to prevent delays

which recently occurred.

MPs of the opposition faction did not support the requests of both KKRT and RTSH. In their opinion, KKRT had been inefficient in the enforcement of their entitlements. They also claimed that RTSH's editorial independence was nonexistent and it served the government rather than the public (see IRIS 2004-6/11). Increased governmental funding would aggravate this situation.

In contrast, the MPs of the ruling majority stated that the requests were reasonable and recommended the funding be granted.

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http://www.parlament.al/web/Procesverbalet_10072_1.php

Minutes of the Parliamentary Media Commission's meetings in Decemeber 2012

