

[MK] Broadcasting Council Issues Plan for Distribution of DTT Capacities

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On 24 December 2012, the Macedonian media regulation authority (Broadcasting Council) adopted the План за намена и распределба на терестријален мултиплекс (Plan for Designation and Distribution of the Transmission Capacities of Digital Multiplexers). The main goal of the plan is the safeguard and improvement of media pluralism in the country once the analogue television will be switched off in June 2013 (see IRIS 2012-5/32 and IRIS 2012-9/30).

The current main piece of media legislation, Закон за радиодифузната дејност (Act on Broadcasting Activity) of 2005, neither regulates the digital terrestrial transmission nor the process of transition from analogue into digital broadcasting. Accordingly, the plan's purpose is to clarify which TV channels will be transmitted via the available digital multiplexes (MUX).

The plan notes that the first, the second and the third MUX shall be used for conditional access audiovisual media services, the fourth and the fifth MUX shall be used for transmission of the public broadcaster's TV channels, whereas according to Art. 11 of the plan the Broadcasting Council will determine which commercial free-to-air TV channels will be transmitted via the sixth and seventh MUX.

The inclusion of commercial TV programme services shall be determined by the Broadcasting Council once a year in accordance with the coverage area and the viewership rates. The Broadcasting Council uses the people meter method of audience research. Apart from that, the plan allows the Broadcasting Council full freedom to select which channels will be transmitted and which will not. Quality of media pluralism is no legally determined criterion to be taken into consideration.

First to be included are broadcasters with nationwide coverage. Secondly, broadcasters with local coverage will be included on the basis of the official ratings outlined in the Broadcasting Council's analysis of the broadcasting market of the previous year.

This practically means that the ratings of the TV channels will be the only criterion determining which TV channels will be included in the MUX allowing the nationwide channels to be the first ones to be transmitted via digital television. The statute itself offers no legal protection mechanisms to the local TV stations

and specialized TV programmes like 24 hour news, educational or documentary channels, which not necessarily would have the highest ratings.

***План за намена и распределба на терестријален мултиплекс,
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http://www.srd.org.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=502%3A2012-11-02-12-22-31&catid=42%3Atop-temi&Itemid=101&lang=en

