[SK] Reinstatement of Broadcasting Fee

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On 7 November 2012, the President of the Slovak Republic signed the Act. No. 340/2012 Coll. on payments for public services provided by the Radio and Television of Slovakia (hereinafter "Act"). The legislative process thus having been completed, the Act came into effect on 1 January 2013. The Act abolishes the former model of financing the Slovakian public broadcaster *Rozhlas a Televízia Slovenska* (Radio and Television of Slovakia - RTVS) which foresaw an annual contribution from the state budget as the main source of income of the RTVS (see IRIS 2012-1/42). This financing model, however, never came into effect (it had been scheduled to start 1 January 2013 onwards). This means that even though the Act is a new piece of legislation, it merely reinstates the model of financing the RTVS that existed since 2008.

Before 2008 only natural persons that owned a TV set or a radio receiver were obliged to pay the broadcasting fee. Due to the fact that a large number of people officially declared to the authorities that they do not own a broadcasting reception device, the amount of money collected from the fees substantially decreased. This led to a change of the financing model. As of 2008, the fees applied to any natural person registered within the databases of the electricity retailers. This also led to a change of the term used for these fees from "broadcasting fee" to "payments for public services provided by the RTVS". The legislators argued that even people that do not own broadcasting reception equipment themselves can nevertheless benefit from these services (e.g. watching it in a café or in a friend's house etc.).

Another reason for this change was the ambition to increase the effectiveness of the fee collection. However, the initiators of this legislative change never satisfactorily explained why only people using the electricity are eligible to benefit from such public service in contrast to people using other sources of power. The reasoning for the present Act is in line with the reasoning from 2008. The official justification states that this model will create a "direct relation between RSTV and the public on the basis of solidarity". It also states that the need to abolish the state budget-financing model is necessary to "ensure the independence of the RTVS" from governmental influence. Another major reason to abolish the state budget model is beyond doubt the condition of the general state budget of the Slovak Republic.

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On the basis of these arguments the Act (re)introduces the broadcasting fee (EUR 4,64 per month) for every natural person that is registered with electricity retailers (household use only) and for employers of at least three employees (from EUR 4,64 up to EUR 464,71 depending on the number of employees). It also reintroduces another form of income for RTVS - the contracts between RTVS and the state (see IRIS 2010-1/40). The Act furthermore upholds the previous system of fee exemptions for certain public organisations and people with permanent disability or people living together in the same household with the latter.

Zákon z 18. októbra 2012 o úhrade za služby verejnosti poskytované Rozhlasom a televíziou Slovenska a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov

http://www.zbierka.sk/sk/predpisy/340-2012-z-z.p-34898.pdf

Act. No 340/2012 Coll. on payments for public services provided by the Radio and Television of Slovakia, 18 October 2012

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