

[MK] Changes to Act on Audio and Audiovisual Services

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After controversial debates over the new Закон за аудио и аудио-визуелни медиуми (Law on Audio and Audiovisual Services) in January 2014 (see IRIS 2013-7/19, IRIS 2013-8/28), the Macedonian Parliament adopted amendments to the audiovisual regulation, which excludes monitoring and regulation of web sites. This is expected to improve the situation of freedom of the media in the country.

One of the main critical issues concerned the question, which professional journalists' association would nominate a member of the Board of the regulatory authority, after a second professional association had been established as a result of political conflicts among different media representatives. An agreement was made, according to which both journalists' associations nominate one representative in the Broadcasting Council within the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services. Art. 4 of the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Services stipulates, "Both associations of journalists from Republic of Macedonia with the biggest number of members nominate one member of the Council each."

More clarity is brought in the process of terminating the mandates of the members of the previous regulatory authority and establishing a new Council within the Agency. The amendments now foresee a complete liquidation of the previous regulatory authority - the Broadcasting Council - and an election of new members by the Parliament. Art. 7 stipulates, "The Parliament of Republic of Macedonia shall publish an open call for nomination of members of the Agency's Council, according to Art. 14 of this Law, within 30 days after this Law has entered in force." However, the imprecise definition of a "journalist" is still part of the law. Now, this might exclude journalists, who do not work in conventional media from press conferences organised by the state institutions.

According to the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM), the new amendments further worsen the situation of the freedom of media in the country. Bearing in mind that the Government, according to the Analysis of the Broadcasting Market for 2012 published by the Agency, is the biggest advertiser on the market, AJM believes that the Government's advertising activities will affect the right on objective information in the media.

Also the European Commission in the Annual Progress Report for 2013 expressed its concern about the Government's massive advertising activities and their influence on media freedom.

Закон за изменување и дополнување на Законот за аудио и аудиовизуелни медиумски услуги од 22 јануари 2014

http://www.avmu.mk/images/Zakon_za_izmenuvanje_i_dopolnuvanje_na_Zakonot_z_a_audio_i_audiovizuelni_mediumski_uslugi.pdf

Act on Audio and Audiovisual Services, 22 january 2014

European Commission's Country's Progress Report

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2013/package/mk_rapport_2013.pdf

Реакција за измените на медиумските закони, Објавено во Четврток, 23. Јануари 2014

<http://www.znm.org.mk/drupal-7.7/mk/node/721>

Press Release of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia, 23 January 2014

