[BG] Another private special-interest channel withdrawn from digital transmission

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Following the early termination of the digital broadcasting licences of two television channels - bTV Lady+1 and RING.BG+1 - in May 2014 (see IRIS 2014-6/8), the Council for Electronic Media received a similar request to cancel the licence of another channel in September. The two media services withdrawn earlier in the year were both provided by the bTV Media Group and are now only available via cable and satellite. The third channel that now wants to stop broadcasting digitally, Diema Family+1, is owned by Bulgaria's second largest TV group, the Nova Broadcasting Group. Following the early termination of this licence, the Nova Broadcasting Group, like its competitor, the bTV Media Group, will only transmit one digital channel, i.e. its main channel, Nova TV.

The analogue switch-off in Bulgaria took place on 30 September 2013. Although the Council for Electronic Media has licensed more than 30 channels for digital terrestrial transmission, less than half of them have started broadcasting via DVB-T. The number of digital channels that can currently be received terrestrially is even smaller - they are the three channels of public service broadcaster BNT (BNT1, BNT2 and BNTHD), bTV, Nova TV, News 7, TV 7, Diema Family+1 (now withdrawn) and Bulgaria on Air.

However, it is not just private TV broadcasters that are having problems financing digital channels. According to the digital multiplex operator First Digital EAD, BNT's failure to pay the fees for the digital transmission of its channels has put First Digital EAD in a very difficult position, preventing it from paying its own running costs and going ahead with planned network investments. Therefore First Digital EAD requested that BNT be ordered by the Council for Electronic Media to pay the long overdue sum of BGN 2,553,580. However, as the regulatory authority, the Council for Electronic Media does not believe it has the legal powers to impose such obligations on BNT. Even so, it has promised to try to act as mediator in this difficult situation once it has heard BNT's position on the matter.

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