

[AL] Parliament Elects Chair and Two Members of the Regulator

IRIS 2015-1:1/6

Ilda Londo
Albanian Media Institute

The Albanian Parliament recently elected the chairman and two new members of the Audiovisual Media Authority (“AMA”). The voting process for the two new members took place on 9 October 2014, while the chairman of the regulator was elected almost a month later on 6 November 2014. AMA’s new chairman is a lawyer with experience managing different companies, including in the media sector. The two new members are a well-known publicist and head of the Institute for Dialogue and Communication and the head of the European Movement Albania.

Both the chairman and the two new members of the regulator were only voted for by the ruling majority of the Members of the Parliament, because the opposition has boycotted all parliament activities since July 2014. However, the opposition MPs quickly condemned the election of the two new members, considering it illegal. Article 9 of the Act 97/2013 (“Act”) on the Audiovisual Media in the Republic of Albania stipulates that proposed AMA candidates must be individually shortlisted by the Parliamentary Committee on Media (“Committee”). The Committee is also instructed favour a balance between three candidates selected by the majority and three selected by the opposition. Following this, all candidates are submitted for approval to the plenary session of the Assembly.

According to the opposition, the Act clearly demands that the shortlisting of the candidates be done jointly by both the ruling majority and the opposition MPs. In addition, the opposition also contested the election of the chairman, claiming his past experience as director in one of the main commercial multiplexes in the country was a sign that both the government and the commercial media were seeking to take control of the regulator.

The voting in the parliament took place after repeated calls from the ruling majority MPs to their opposition colleagues to participate in the shortlisting process of the candidates. After these appeals were rejected in the context of general parliamentary boycott by the opposition, the ruling majority decided to proceed on its own, claiming that filling the vacancies in AMA required urgent action, because the deadline for the digital switchover is approaching, while the institution is hardly functional.

This decision was preceded by several months of discussions and disagreements between the MPs on the number of vacancies in the AMA. The disagreement focused on the validity of the mandate of the then-chairwoman of the AMA. The ruling majority claimed that the mandate of the then-chairwoman of the AMA was invalid. This argument was based on a memo of the Service of Monitoring of Independent Institutions, which concluded that her mandate had expired in September 2012, so that her continued service in the position over the previous 18 months was illegal. On this basis, the memo demanded that she be re-elected as a member of the AMA. On the other hand, the opposition MPs and the then-chairwoman of the AMA argued that the same body, the Service of Monitoring of Independent Institutions, had changed their opinion on this matter in July 2013, when they stated that there were three vacancies in AMA, not four.

Kuvendi mblidhet në seancë plenare. Kuvendi zgjedh kryetarin e ri të AMA-s, z. Gentian Sala.

http://www.parlament.al/web/Kuvendi_mblidhet_ne_seance_plenare_Kuvendi_zgjedh_kryetarin_e_ri_te_AMA_s_z_Gentian_Sala_18430_1.php

Report on the plenary session of 6 November 2014

