[BG] New procedure for electing members of the Bulgarian media regulator

IRIS 2016-6:1/7

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On 27 April 2016, the Bulgarian National Assembly elected two new members to the Council for Electronic Media (CEM) under a new procedure adopted on 8 April 2016. The new provisions relate in particular to the nomination of candidates, the public announcement of their nomination, and their being interviewed before the Culture and Media Committee, as well as their election by the National Assembly.

Although the 1998 Broadcasting Act, which was last amended in December 2015, provided in section 24(1) for three members of the CEM to be elected by the parliament and for two to be appointed by the state president, the election procedure has not been specified in detail until now. In the past, this often led to arguments and lengthy delays when an individual term of office expired, so the prompt transition to new terms of office was not possible and the terms of the members concerned were extended as a result. A very recent example was in spring 2015, when the terms of office of one member appointed by the state president and two members elected by the National Assembly had expired without the parliament electing two successors for the new term. The incumbent members continued their work in accordance with the continuity principle in force at the time. This was not altered by the fact that the state president had appointed a new member in time, because section 24(2) of the Bulgarian Broadcasting Act states that the president’s decision shall enter into force together with that of the parliament. In a letter to the speaker of the parliament, the state president and the chairman of the CEM, the Supreme Administrative Public Prosecutor's Office drew attention to this delay, emphasising that it results in the media regulator continuing to work with the same members as before.

The procedural rules now passed by the parliament provide four different steps. Firstly, individual MPs or political groups can submit proposals for the election of future members. These must contain a statement detailing “the nominees’ professional recognition and social authority”. They must also specify the documents to be attached. The second step is a public announcement, which involves all documents (subject to compliance with data protection provisions) being made available via a specially created link at the National Assembly’s website. Non-profit and professional organisations can comment on the candidacies of the individuals nominated and propose questions for the candidates to be asked at a public interview, which takes place before the

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National Assembly's Culture and Media Committee. The latter then drafts a report, which must also be published on the website no later than 24 hours before the sitting of parliament. The National Assembly then elects members at a public sitting. A candidate with more than half the votes of the MPs present is elected.

In April 2016, the Bulgarian National Assembly chose the two members that it had to elect under this new procedure. This election was particularly important because the CEM will soon elect the director of the public service radio broadcaster, Bulgarian National Radio (BNR), and the director of the public service TV broadcaster, Bulgarian National television (BNT).

РЕШЕНИЕ на 43-то Народно събрание на 8 април 2016 г. за приемане на процедурни правила за условията и реда за предлагане на кандидати за членове на Съвета за електронни медии от квотата на Народното събрание, представянето и публичното оповестяване на документите и изслушването на кандидатите в Комисията по културата и медиите, както и процедурата за избор от Народното събрание

http://www.parliament.bg/bg/desision/ID/42091

Decision of the 43rd National Assembly of 8 April 2016 on the procedural rules for nominating candidates for membership of the Council for Electronic Media from the National Assembly quota, the submission and public announcement of documents, the interviewing of candidates in the Culture and Media Committee and their election by the National Assembly

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