[BA] Parliament does not support extending collection of RTV tax

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Radenko Udovičić
Media Plan Institute, Sarajevo

On 1 August 2016, the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina in a session in Sarajevo did not accept a renewed request by Social-Democratic Party (SDP) delegates to extend the collection of radio and television (RTV) tax through telecom operators after 31 December 2016. Republika Srpska (Serb Republic) delegates blocked the initiative, since they had previously requested that funds from the tax be redistributed in a different way among the state broadcaster and the entity broadcasters.

The RTV tax is collected through landline bills, which citizens are cancelling on a large scale due to the popularity of mobile telephones and free online services. A proposal to collect the tax through electricity bills was not supported by an earlier majority vote and thus the latest SDP proposal had been to extend the current solution for several months until a comprehensive reconstruction of the public broadcasting system was agreed upon (see IRIS 2016-8/13). Croat political parties in particular are insisting on full reconstruction, as they maintain that the current broadcasting system does not fulfil the linguistic or political interests of Croats of BA.

After the House session, the Radio-Television of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (RTV FBiH) management announced that it was left without any funds because, in addition to losing the tax, the entity broadcasters are not paying their obligations to the national broadcaster. The monthly radio and television tax is KM 7,5 (EUR 3,8). In Europe, the tax is lower only in Serbia, but its public service also receives money from the state budget.

The Radio-Television of the Republika Srpska (RTRS), the entity public television of the Republika Srpska, is every day strengthening its direct collection service through door to door collectors. In August, this public service also launched a campaign to collect the tax through bank standing orders for people who have jobs. However, the funds that are collected this way are not shared at a ratio of 25 percent for each entity television and 50 percent for the state public service as in the previous model for distributing the TV tax.

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