

## [BA] Still without digital TV - release of the digital test signal postponed

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Although, it was planned that the digital TV signal would start being delivered by the three public TV services in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BA) on 29 September 2016, the beginning of this process has been postponed. The public broadcaster Radio-Television of Republika Srpska (RTRS) has asked that the deadline be prolonged until mid-October. The reason for the request is unknown. Representatives of the three public broadcasters and the Ministry of Communication and Transport stated that the reasons are technical and procedural and will soon be resolved. A Ministry statement states, “all technical and organizational preconditions for this event have been provided, but a memo arrived from RTRS suggesting that the date may be postponed until the middle of October”.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is the only country in Europe that does not have digital TV broadcasting. It even missed a deadline set by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations (UN) for 15 June 2015 as the final date for the switch to digital broadcasting worldwide. Activities for the switch to digital broadcasting in BA started in 2009. The Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA) set up an expert forum composed of representatives of public services, media experts, and broadcasting experts, as well as government representatives, who produced the “Strategy for Transition from Analogue to Digital Terrestrial Broadcasting”, adopted by the Council of Ministers (the national government) in 2010. The Strategy stipulated the creation of two multiplexes, one for public TV services and the other completely commercial. It even set a date for the switch to digital broadcasting, 31 December 2011, a year earlier than the date set by the European Union for its member states. However, due to numerous technical, procedural, and political problems, the deadline has been missed by nearly five years. For example, just the implementation of a tender for the procurement of digital transmission equipment, lasted around a year and a half, due to complicated tender procedures and applicants’ complaints. Similarly, a dispute about equipment ownership among the three public services lasted more than a year, stalling the whole process. It is interesting that funds for digitalization were not a problem as they were provided by the Council of Ministers from revenues generated by CRA, which collects license fees from broadcasters as well as telecom operators.

Test broadcasting is supposed to cover only the three biggest cities in BA - Sarajevo, Banja Luka, and Mostar, while achieving coverage for the whole country and shutting down the analogue signal will take more than a year. However, clients of telecom and cable operators have HD signal for a large number of televisions.

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