[AL] Commercial operators propose an amendment entitling them to public funds from the licence fee

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A group of owners of commercial media held a meeting with the regulatory authority, the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA), on 11 June 2018, with the aim of discussing the commercial operators' request to receive part of the licence fee allocated to the public broadcaster in Albania. The proposal was drafted by the Association of Electronic Media, an association representing the main commercial media owners in the country; present at the meeting there were directors and owners of two national stations and four local ones.

The proposed amendment stipulated that a "broadcasting fund" would be set up to support commercial broadcasters. The source of funding for this support would be the licence fee currently benefiting the public broadcaster in Albania. The funds collected for the licence fee would be divided in the following manner: 50% would remain with the public broadcaster and another 20% would also go to public broadcaster for the purpose of enabling the distribution of decoders for the population, while the remaining 30% of the collected amount would go to the private broadcasters. Once digital switchover is completed, the commercial and public broadcasters would share 50% of the funds collected. In the view of the media owners (as published in an AMA press release), the process of digital switchover has increased the costs of commercial broadcasters, while the advertising market has shrunk, and this proposed amendment would serve to rebalance the market.

The proposed amendment stated that, in return for financial support, commercial television would broadcast public awareness messages and campaigns, and the funds collected would be divided between the commercial operators according to their audience share; until a proper mechanism for determining the respective audience shares of the media outlets was in place audience share would be established according to each television channel's advertising revenue.

During the meeting organised with representatives of AMA, the directors and owners of commercial media argued that the funds would serve to improve the quality of their content and increase their credibility. In addition, they also said that the law would strengthen investigative journalism, and by improving their financial situation make them less vulnerable to economic pressure.

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The Association of Electronic Media asked the regulator to consider the proposed amendment and also to forward it to other relevant bodies and institutions. At the moment the licence fee for Albanian public broadcasters is among the lowest in Europe, amounting to about EUR 0.80 per month, which each household pays with its electricity bill.

Takim konsultativ në AMA për propozimet e grupeve të interesit për ndryshime në ligjin 97/2013

http://ama.gov.al/2018/06/11/takim-konsultativ-ne-ama-per-propozimet-e-grupeve-te-interesit-per-ndryshime-ne-ligjin-97-2013/

Press release of the Audiovisual Media Authority on the meeting and consultation with the media owners

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