

Reaction to instances of interference with the independence of regulatory authorities

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The Agency for Electronic Media condemns another in a series of instances of interference with the independence of regulatory authorities for audiovisual media services in Europe by the state authorities. The Agency firmly believes that independent regulation in the field of electronic media is a cornerstone of media freedoms and appeals to all state authorities to provide all necessary conditions for independent and undisturbed operation of the regulatory authorities in this field.

In a letter to the European Commission, which was forwarded to all members of the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA), the President of the Electronic Media Council of Croatia, Mirjana Rakić, informs the Commission that the Government of the Republic of Croatia had adopted, at a meeting held on 10 March 2016, a proposal of the Ministry of Culture not to accept the activity report of the Electronic Media Council and Agency and initiate the procedure of dismissal of the Electronic Media Council members at the Croatian Parliament.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia explains this decision by the absence of supervision over the use of monthly fee and other and other public revenues in line with the state aid rules for the public broadcasting services by the Croatian Radiotelevision, since the Council's annual report does not mention that such a supervision took place, which created conditions for dismissal of the Council members in compliance with Article 68 of the Electronic Media Law.

The Agency of Electronic Media of Montenegro believes that such initiatives of state authorities violates long and carefully developed system of free and independent regulation in Europe and represents a great step back in the field of freedom of expression and independence of the media.

Consequently, the Agency expresses hope that, decisively defending the principles of independent regulation in the European Union, and recommendations and standards of the Council of Europe on the independence of regulatory authorities for electronic media, the Croatian Parliament, as a legislative authority of an EU Member State, will not accept the Government's initiative and initiate the procedure of dismissal of the Electronic Council members.

The Agency supports the conclusions of the last meeting of the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services, as an advisory body of the European Commission in the field of audiovisual media services, expressing concern about the interference with independence of media regulators in an increasing number of European countries.

Finally, the Agency expresses hope that the practice of interference with the independence of regulatory authorities, which has become increasingly frequent in European countries, will stop before it leaves irreparable negative consequences on the freedom of expression and independence of media in Europe.

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