

# High Representative Calls for European Standards in Public Broadcasting Reform

The OHR welcomes the decision by RS Communications Minister Solaja to establish a group to advise him on the reform of the public broadcasting system of BiH, and in particular on how that reform process will benefit RTRS. The OHR takes this opportunity to underline that any solution has to be in line with European standards and the Dayton Peace Agreement.

The state and entity ministers of communication are leading the process of reforming the public broadcast system to strengthen its financial viability and editorial independence, and build on the achievements to date. It is therefore a positive development that Minister Solaja has decided to take the initiative and begin consultations on the necessary legal changes.

The three communication ministers are due to submit draft legislation for government approval and entry into parliament by 7 November. The Ministers and their representatives are members of a joint legislative working group, which includes the Chairmen of the Boards of Governors of FedTV, RTRS and BHTV. The three ministers have political responsibility for ensuring that appropriate draft laws are drawn up on time, while the Governors have responsibility for ensuring that the views of the broadcasters are adequately reflected in the reform process. The OHR is facilitating the work of this working group, and has provided model public broadcasting laws as a basis for further discussions. The OHR notes that the three ministers have accepted that the model laws should be the basis for this process.

The High Representative is strongly of the view that the

institutions of BiH need finally to take responsibility for ensuring that this country has a viable public broadcasting system in line with European standards and Dayton. But he underlines that it would be a mistake to conclude from this that the OHR does not care about the outcome of the process. The OHR will not allow any developments that undo what has already been achieved, including the establishment of a single BiH public broadcast system.

European standards demand that BiH's broadcast system must be independent from politicians and financially viable. Dayton Peace Agreement demands that BiH's broadcast system can never again be used to promote ethnic propaganda, division and instability. Nobody should doubt that the OHR will intervene if any politician tries to challenge these basic principles.