

OHR requests RSNA not to place the Draft Law on RTRS on the agenda

The High Representative is concerned that the RS Government has forwarded to the RS National Assembly a Draft Law on Radio Television Republika Srpska which differs from the version drafted and agreed upon by a Joint Working Group made up of representatives of the RS Government, RTRS and the OHR. The High Representative yesterday sent a letter to the Speaker of the RSNA requesting that the law not be put on the agenda.

Last August the Joint Working Group presented the RS Government with a version that was fully consistent with European standards of public broadcasting. This Joint Working Group was set up with the purpose of preparing a consensus draft, which would then be sent to the RSNA for adoption. As the consensus proposal has not been adhered to, the High Representative has requested the RSNA to postpone parliamentary discussion of the Draft Law, which is scheduled for tomorrow. The draft presented by the RS Government contains several contentious areas that need to be addressed.

The High Representative believes that the principles of independent public broadcasting should in no way be compromised. Public service broadcasting means professional broadcasting that serves the public's interest, it is the public who finance the broadcaster through a subscription fee. The broadcaster should also have a Governing Board that is independent of the Government and will uphold professional standards above all else. BiH and its Entities are building a new media environment founded on functional and financial independence. For an emerging democracy, and a candidate for

Council of Europe membership, state control of information through state funded media is not an option. BiH is becoming a part of the European mainstream and is facing technological and professional media requirements that Government at all levels needs to recognise.

The High Representative also points out that an independent and viable public broadcasting system in BiH is also a requirement of the EU Road Map and all relevant institutions must bear this in mind.