

High Representative Imposes Public Service Broadcasting Legislation

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, last night issued a package of Decisions providing a legal base for the three public broadcasters of the Public Broadcasting System in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These laws – the Law on the Basis of the Public Broadcasting System and on the Public Broadcasting Service of BiH, the Law on Radio Television Federation BiH and the Law on Radio Television of Republika Srpska – represent a milestone in the process of restructuring the public broadcasting system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with European standards as repeatedly called for by the Peace Implementation Council. In addition, they fulfill an important requirement of the European Union Road Map.

The laws enshrine the authority of the Communications Regulatory Agency in its relationship with the Public Broadcasting System, and ensure a fair balance between the interests of the public and commercial broadcasting sectors, both of which are essential for a pluralistic broadcasting landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A commitment by the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina paved the way for this package of Decisions when in June 1998 it adopted the Memorandum of Understanding on the restructuring of Radio-Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since then, two Decisions of the High Representative have been issued on the restructuring of the Public Broadcasting Service system in BiH that have supported the RTV BiH transformation process. The legal framework imposed yesterday represents a fundamental precondition to enable the public broadcasters to function effectively and to have a sound financial basis.

The High Representative commends the working groups who have worked on all three laws for their professionalism and dedication to the drafting process. However, owing to persistent objections from the Republika Srpska, it became clear that no political agreement was possible. The High Representative has therefore imposed these three laws.

Also imposed in this package was a Decision on the liquidation of Radio-Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina in line with the High Representative's Second Decision on Restructuring the Public Broadcasting System in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This Decision was required as no state level law exists that deals with the liquidation of public companies.