

Joint Statement on RTV Tax and Public Broadcasting in Bosnia and Herzegovina



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Recent statements made by public officials in Republika Srpska about the future of the country's Radio Television (RTV) tax raise concerns regarding their commitment to sustainable public service broadcasting, the independence of editorial policy and the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union (EU).

The Law on the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) governs management and financial arrangements for the three public broadcasters in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We strongly believe that initiatives to dismantle the established funding arrangements for public broadcasters are inconsistent with BiH's European perspective.

The main focus should be on formation of the corporate structure for BiH's public broadcasting system which is critical to the implementation of this country's transition from an analogue to digital terrestrial signal. This is a process that will impact access to information for every citizen of BiH, and must be completed by the end of 2014, a

deadline for switch-off of analogue television broadcasting, set by the International Telecommunications Union. We commend the recent steps made by the Steering Board of the PBS toward creation of the Corporation and strongly encourage the completion of this process.

By law, the public broadcasters have editorial independence, are responsible for presenting diverse and balanced programmes, and should operate independent of political influence.

Concerns with the content of public broadcasters' programming should be directed to the regulatory body designated by law – the Communications Regulatory Agency.

Professional, independent and unbiased media institutions are one of the most important aspects of a thriving democratic society and represent a core value of our organizations. We urge adherence to these principles and note that we are closely monitoring all developments regarding public media institutions.