

Statement Regarding the Fate of Regional TV Companies after the Analogue Broadcasting Switch-Off in Armenia

November 7, 2016

Last week, on November 3, 2016, the heads of six Armenian regional TV companies addressed an open letter to the RA President, Chairman of the RA National Assembly and RA Prime Minister, which noted that after the analogue broadcasting switch-off in the country (Ed. Note: from October 26, 2016) they were deprived of audience and found themselves on the brink of closing down. Overall, 11 regional TV companies met this fate.

As far back as in 2010 with the start of the digitalization process, those responsible for the broadcast sphere brought forward a vulnerable model, according to which in each region only one local TV company will operate, and others will close down. Based on this approach, respective amendments were made to the RA Law “On Television and Radio”, as well as licensing competitions were held. However, so far neither the experts nor the public have got any serious argument on why, for instance, in Lori region there must be one TV company broadcasting in digital mode and the remaining four, which have stable audience, must stop operating.

We, the undersigned, have been studying the possibilities of the exit from this absurd situation for already 6 years and come up with recommendations containing concrete legislative and technical solutions. We are convinced that the closing down of 11 local TV companies in the digital era – in which the technical capacities for broadcasting are practically limitless – is simply intolerable and unacceptable. Although still in 2010 RA President Serzh Sargsyan assured that the Law “On Television and Radio” would be thoroughly optimized, the changes adopted after that by and large remained in line with the approaches which had been widely criticized earlier.

Based on the above-mentioned, we call on:

- The RA President in response to the open letter by the heads of regional TV companies to meet them, discuss the existing problems and contribute to taking necessary measures by the relevant bodies, which will ensure the continuation of normal operation of all the regional TV companies in the era of digitalization;
- The National Commission on Television and Radio to make practical steps aimed at thorough resolution of the problems of the TV companies which found themselves on the brink of closing down.

We express our readiness to participate in all the discussions and provide the greatest possible assistance for finding the best solutions.

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