

07.10.2016 - SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMPLETION OF THE IPA PROJECT 2011

Your Excellency, Mr. Samuel Zbogor, Ambassador of the European Union,

Distinguished Members of the Agency Council,

Honorable representatives of the Ministry of Finance,

Representatives of the Broadcasters and Operators,

Representatives of ASSECO,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to have you all here with us today, at this closing event that marks the completion of the IPA Project 2011, titled "Supply of Equipment for Monitoring Media Contents Conducted by the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Services".

This project is of special importance for the Agency, as, with its help, we obtained new equipment and a system for monitoring media contents. In this way, the Agency modernized its system for recording, keeping and reviewing programme contents broadcasted by the radio and television stations. At the same time, this has made it possible to receive the signals of all broadcasters licensed to perform broadcasting activity on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the signals of all operators of public electronic communication networks in the Republic of Macedonia, here, at the Agency Headquarters. The signals are transferred from eight remote locations for collecting signals to one central signal collection point located here, at the Agency, which also serves as a remote location for Skopje.

The total value of the equipment for monitoring media contents is 839,608.00 Euros, 75 % of which have been provided as financial aid by the European Commission. For this, I would like to express special gratitude to the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Macedonia – both for this

project and for the projects carried out in the past years, as well as for the continuous support extended to us by the EU Delegation to the Republic of Macedonia in our daily work. The remaining 25 %, i.e. 209,902.00 Euros, were provided through co-financing from the Agency's budget. Let me also extend my gratitude to the ASSECO SEE Company and the SALVIOL Consortium from Ljubljana, who implemented the software and the monitoring equipment, and without whose expertise and experience this project would not have been realized. My thanks also goes to the Central Financing and Contracting Unit of the Ministry of Finance and the Secretariat for European Affairs, for their successful cooperation so far.

The new equipment for monitoring media contents by the Agency ensures continuous 24-hour recording of the programmes broadcasted by the radio and television programming services to which the Agency has granted licenses, and recordings of at least 90 seconds for each programming service retransmitted by the Public Communication Network Operators, at least four times a day, i.e. during 24 hours. I would like to stress that, since the commencement of this project, the Agency has also held several meetings with the cable operators, in order to find the easiest and most acceptable solution for distribution of their signals to the Agency's remote locations.

Dear guests,

The Republic of Macedonia is at the threshold of its integration into the EU and the Euro-Atlantic community of free and democratic states, with which we share identical values. In this regard, development and modernization of media regulators should be a challenge and additional motive for creating partnerships and building mutual confidence among all the stakeholders of society.

The Agency has always performed its work professionally, without bias and by observing the principles, and it will continue to do so in the future, regardless of the pressure being exerted on this regulatory body and its employees. We expect the media to do same – inform their audience objectively and impartially about the ongoing events and developments.

We intend to continue playing our role of an independent and highly professional regulator zealously in the future, taking particular care of ensuring pluralism in the media sphere and freedom of expression as the utmost priority of any democratic society.

At this time, we are being put in the spotlight because of the monitoring performed by our Agency in relation to the Early Parliamentary Elections due on 11 December 2016. In line with the electoral regulations and the political agreement, the monitoring started on 2 September 2016. Until the start of the election campaign, 18 programming services that broadcast programme at the state level will be the object of monitoring. To date, the Agency has published two ten-day reports on each of the programming services monitored. Today, the reports for the third ten-day period will be published, covering the span from 22 September until 1 October 2016. On the proposal of the Ad Hoc Committee for Observing Media Reporting, 4 misdemeanor proceedings have so far been initiated with the competent court.

Let me stress, on this occasion, that the Professional Service of the Agency has always conducted monitoring of electoral coverage – as well as other forms of supervision – conscientiously and objectively, in line with the methodology defined by international rules and practices. The expertise and competence of the Agency's Professional Service can also be evaluated from the monitoring reports available on our website. In this respect, I would like to add that, recently, we paid a working visit to the Council for Electronic Media of the Republic of Bulgaria, where representatives of our Agency held a workshop on the specific features and practical implementation of media monitoring during electoral processes in the Republic of Macedonia. The Agency holds frequent meetings and maintains continuous cooperation with other Balkan and European regulatory authorities as well. In the past period, we have paid study visits to the Spanish, Portuguese and French regulators, again with the assistance of and support from the European Commission.

In the end, I would like to underline that we will continue to remain transparent in terms of all the processes in the Agency, while professional attitude towards the media and all parties concerned will remain our priority in the future as well.

Let me finish by giving special thanks to all the employees in the Agency who engaged themselves unselfishly in the realization of this project – to Emilija, Lucija, Irena, Dragica, Arben, Argjent, Ognen, Shqipe; to Mr. Jonche Grozdanovski of the Agency for Electronic Communications. My apologies if I omitted anyone unintentionally. And finally, let me express my special gratitude to the President of

the Council, Mr. Lazo Petrushevski, whose unselfish assistance in preparing the technical specification for the project was of immense value to us.

Thank you.