



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media
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Communiqué on the digital switchover

In accordance with the rules agreed within the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the switchover from analogue to digital terrestrial broadcasting in a significant part of the OSCE area is to be completed today, 17 June 2015.

As already stressed in the Guide to the Digital Switchover published by my Office in 2010, this is mainly a technological change, but it is designed also to facilitate the creation of a media landscape protecting freedom of expression and plurality of opinions.

Several OSCE participating States have completed this process, while others are still approaching the switchover.

Full transition to digital terrestrial broadcasting is a basic pre-condition for the effective creation of an environment where as many voices as possible are able to be heard. Moreover, the digital dividend derived from this process may increase communication capacities exponentially for individuals, beyond traditional media.

However, it is necessary to underline that audiovisual laws and policies covering the switchover in several participating States have not fulfilled the expectations brought by technological changes.

Access of independent broadcasters to frequencies and slots on multiplexes has in some cases become even more restrictive and guided by arbitrary, non-transparent rules and politically motivated regulators. As a result, independent media have not found a proper space in the new landscape. Digital transitions have not been seen or used as an opportunity to transform the remaining state broadcasters into independent public service media.

On this important day I encourage OSCE participating States to complete the digital switchover as soon as possible, using legal reforms and policies primarily based on the promotion of media freedom and pluralism.

Dunja Mijatović

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