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Ministry of Culture
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WORKING SESSION 1

Statement by Milos Jankovic, assistant minister

After the political changes in Serbia in 2000, one of the prerequisites for more democratic society was, of course, bringing out of the laws which would, according to European standards, regulate area of public informing and provide democratic media functioning. However, besides that after the above mentioned changes the set of laws that regulate this area had been adopted in relatively short period, it's evident that some of them, firstly because of technical reasons, entered in period of it's fully use during the previous, and specially during the next year, 2006. First of all it refers to Broadcasting Law, where by constituting of The Council of The Republic Broadcasting Agency has been provided further application of this law. There's been brought out a strategy of broadcasting development in The Republic of Serbia until the year of 2013. An opened competition for assigning of broadcasting permits for national area and area of The Autonomous province has been announced.

Also, after the long and hard involvement of The Ministry of Culture and other subjects, Serbian Radio and Television has finally been transformed to a public service. According to that transformation, off May of this year, the bearers of the public broadcasting service are Broadcasting Institution of Serbia and Broadcasting Institution of Vojvodina.

When it comes to local and regional electronic media which are financed from the budget means, the phase of process of their privatization is quite progressed, and it can be rightfully expected to end in legal deadline, by the end of year 2007.

However, the above named activities and very concrete and daily putting The Broadcasting law into effect, pointed to some unsaid, none precise things, and lack of specific regulations. The Broadcasting Law has by now been changed for three times, when one part of the regulations, also referring to advertising and sponsoring, was transferred to The Law of Advertising. The initiative for new, the fourth changing of the law, was twofold. One proposal on changes and amendments of The Broadcasting Law came from The Ministry of Culture, while the other one came as the initiative of the group of the public representatives of The National Assembly. This other proposal was adopted a few days ago in The Assembly of The Republic of Serbia. However, as a proposal for changes and amendments of The Broadcasting Law, whose proposer is The Ministry of Culture, makes 50 amendments and which was discussed publicly, was sent for coming out to all the Ministries, NGOs, OSCE, professional associations and other interested parts. Considering the fact that these amendments were going towards law improvement when it comes to it's putting into effect, towards improving of informing and fully protection and promotion of the right of informing in the electronic media, they will certainly come to agenda of The Assembly in one of the future procedures.

The Law of free access to information of public importance, which is also in the jurisdiction of The Ministry of Culture, begun, the same as the previous one, with it's fully use during the above named period. First of all it was provided by the founding of The Institution of Commissioner for information of public importance, which was adopted by The Assembly of The Republic of Serbia. This placed Serbia into a group of 13 countries which have commissioner for information of public importance. The expert service of The Ministry of Culture follows putting these law regulations into effect in collaboration with Commissioner, and so far there have not been initiatives for changes or amendments. Yet, there should be mentioned that, besides the expectations, a significantly bigger percent of those who use the

rights regulated by this law are the very citizens, while the percent of the journalists that accomplish this right is significantly smaller.

It is important to point out that, by the initiative of The Ministry of Culture and in purpose of the protection of the journalists, the felony of slander and insult done by the means of public informing according to the new Criminal Statute is sanctioned by the monetary fine, instead of a prison fine, predicted by the previous law.

The one thing that awaits Serbia in very close future, and refers to legal regulation connected to media field, is bringing out of the Law of The Media Presence and Transparency of Property in Media. Beside the state organs, it will demand the implementation of professional societies, but consultations with OSCE experts as well.

The Law of Public Informing is regularly applied. Among other things The Ministry of Culture supervises putting this law into effect, with emphasis on the prevention of speech of hatred, pornography, care and protection of juveniles, but also on accomplishing of all other rights which are issued by The Law of Public Informing.

Beside the large number of the above mentioned laws considering media and efforts to apply them fully, as well as working on their improving, The Ministry of Culture takes numerous activities directed towards fully accomplishment right of informing, as well as basic human right and accomplishing of independent and professional journalism. Mentioned activities go in two directions.

The first one is providing the means of state help for development of pluralism of opinion, as the basic assumption of freedom of media. In that purpose The Ministry of Culture supports through opened competitions programs and projects which promote objective and independent journalism, dialog in society, education and professionalizing of journalists, ongoing subjects, informing of national minorities and technical improving of working.

The other direction is led by the idea of importance and role of media in development of civil society, which beside the law regulated obligations means also protection and responsibility of journalists when it comes to their profession and public. According to that, there's been established cooperation with media and representative journalist's societies as a model for accomplishing of mutual goal:

- improvement and professionalizing of media
- achieving and respecting of standard and codex of journalist's profession

Different subjects are opened and conclusions and suggestions of all the interested and public in general are being taken through the seminars and the round tables by the mutual projects with NGOs and professional societies, and then they work on their implementation. Of course it's worth to mention (as good examples) that with the help of The Ministry of Culture were held:

- Seminar about professional, social and author rights of independent journalists
- Round tables with subject "How to prevent turning the press into the battlefield of insults, slander and pornography?"

Also in the purpose of the above mentioned accomplishing of right of national minorities to be informed in their own language (though the rights of the national minorities will generally be the subject of one of the next sessions of this meeting), The Ministry of Culture introduced, as an institution, an opened competition for co-financing of programs and projects which are intended to support as larger as possible number of quality, traditional and authentic projects and means of informing of national minorities. The amount of means from this opened competition is increasing a year by year, and starting with this year there's been introduced obligated opinion of The National Council on national minorities, which will decide which projects are to be supported. These activities have been undertaken accordingly with social circumstances in which in Serbia (not taking Kosovo and Metohy into account) live 16% of population which belong to one of the twenty different national or ethnical groups, and also taking into account OSCE References from The Hague, Oslo and Lund, as well as the other internationally overtaken obligations considering human and minority rights. In the frame of The Romas Decade, the larger amount of means anticipated by The Opened competition for national minorities is given by positive action to Romas. Also, a large number of other activities are being taken in purpose of their as successful as possible integration into the social courses.

