

Honourable Commissioner Věra Jourová,

Recently we have been concerned about the reports on proposed changes to Slovenian media legislation. It has been hastily and secretly prepared by the closed circle of the Cabinet of Ministry of Culture, on behalf of the current Government of the Republic of Slovenia, without the participation of stakeholders and professionals. Allow us to briefly acquaint you with the critical elements of the proposed changes, which will have radical consequences for the media landscape in Slovenia, alongside a negative impact on the democratic development of our homeland.

In the proposition, the changes envisage radical interventions in the financing and functioning of the public media service, thus causing it to transform from a public service to just another one of the media outlets in the country.

RTV contribution represents the foundation of political and financial independence and thus the basis of public media status. By proposing the division of said contribution amongst other media, they are, under the false pretext of pursuing the public interest, favouring well-defined and precisely selected media, owned or directly influenced and controlled by the leading coalition party SDS. Moreover, in the proposed legislation, the intended exclusion of the institutional organization unit "Transmitters and Communications" is related to the proposers desire of strengthening the television activity of the Nova24TV and Planet TV media; both of which are, or are passing under the auspices of Hungarian assets associated with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and the Fidesz party.

RTV Slovenia is the only public, non-profit radio and television organization in Slovenia. As a public institution of unique cultural and national importance, it performs by a law specified public service in the department of radio and television activity. Its purpose is to satisfy the democratic, social and cultural needs of Slovenian citizens, as well as members of the Slovenian national minorities and the Italian and Hungarian communities.

Slovenian Press Agency (STA) is currently financed directly from the Slovenian budget, where over the years, their share has been reduced continuously. According to this proposal, STA would no longer be financed directly from the budget, while their financing would only include a redirected part of the RTV contribution. Furthermore, the leverage for the appointment of the STA leadership (the government would appoint four of the five members of the supervisory board) is a big step backwards in ensuring the autonomy and independence of the agency.

Based on what has been written, we are assuming that the establishment of governmental control over the public, regional and local media, is the primary purpose of proposed changes. It would destroy stable and independent journalistic reporting, thus destroying the pillars of any democratic society.

The planned subordination of the media to Slovenia's governmental politics, reflected in different proposed changes in media legislation and numerous public statements by the SDS party following the occurrences in other member states, is alarming for 21st century Europe.

The controversy of the proposed legislation, due to the interference in the independence of Slovenian media services, has been pointed out by many independent organizations in Slovenia. Simultaneously, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the European Union of Journalists (EFJ) and the Media Organization of Southeast Europe (SEEMO) have addressed a letter expressing great concern for the future of public media in Slovenia, to the Prime Minister Janša.

Honourable Commissioner, we urge you to safeguard media independence in the EU, to continue to draw attention to the violations of media freedom and, consequently, to open a debate on an actual case at European level as well.

Sincerely yours,
Irena Joveva
dr. Klemen Grošelj