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AMA plan on digital switchover process

The Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA) has drafted the work plan for the process of digital switchover, covering the detailed tasks to be completed in the time span February – June 2015. The work plan includes these major areas: drafting of regulations that would enable start of digital switchover, agreement with public broadcaster on switchover plan, communicating and agreeing with local analogue operators, communication with ITU, state funding needed, and the public awareness campaign. More specifically, the plan of activities includes the following tasks and respective deadlines:

- Regulation to be revised:

1. “Beauty Contest” Regulation. This was first drafted, consulted, and approved in July 2013. Two multiplexes refused to take part in consultations and then took the matter to court. Currently the regulation has been sent to the operators, expecting their feedback, while the regulation is planned to be finalized by the end of March. The respective application forms have been drafted and, pending suggestions from operators, are expected to be ready by mid April, which then will lead to the opening of the competition and examination of applications for licenses.
2. Regulation on enumeration plan of programs. The plan is drafted, but its final form will depend on revision of “beauty contest” regulation and on the construction of the networks of the public broadcaster. The current deadline is end of April.
3. The regulation on conditional access is drafted, but needs to be revised, due by April 20.

- Tasks to be agreed on through cooperation of AMA with RTSH:

1. Determining the criteria and number of programs of public nature and free-to-air, and those with conditional access has yet to be discussed. The common work group between AMA and RTSH is being established and the plan will be discussed with stakeholders. The work is planned to take place until the end of April.
2. Establishing the criteria and contracts that RTSH and existing local operators will sign for using the network of the public operator. Simultaneously, the issue of fees the operators must

pay for using this network will be discussed. Local operators will be part of the discussion and the final contract will be approved by AMA. The deadline is end of April.

3. The plan of frequencies for the first stage, including the RTSH digital networks and those of national private operators, has already been prepared.

4. The regulation on criteria and regulatory measures for common use of RTSH's broadcasting infrastructure is prepared, but will be revised, in cooperation with RTSH and then with the operators. The deadline is end of April.

- Analogue local networks:

1. Digitalization of analogue local networks. The operators have officially been notified of the existing alternatives and 28 of them have replied back on their decision on which network they plan to use or if they will build on their own. Part of this task is also ongoing cooperation with RTSH. The decision to postpone the notification process until April 15 is under discussion.

2. Technical documentation of networks for local operators is ready, but can be revised if needed, planned to be finalized by March 27.

3. The preparation of technical documentation of local terrestrial digital networks for each allotment has been completed in February, along with the determination of installment locations of MUX 1.

4. A list of operators that are considered with low capacities to afford annual fees of using the digital networks has been drafted, based on their annual balances.

5. Depending on the progress of construction of the RTSH multiplexes, the plan of coverage for each operator and the action plan will be drafted, coordinating the use of public networks by local private operators.

- Cooperation with ITU:

1. The respective notifications to ITU have been revised and are expected to be approved after negotiations are completed.

- State funding:

1. Three requests have been made to Ministry of Finances to ask for state funding to cover the costs of digital switchover. The first request was not accepted, while it remains to be seen what will be the reply for the next two requests.

- Public information campaign:

1. A call-center will have to be established. The final structure and plan will be revised by the end of March. Funds will have to be secured, the staff will have to be trained and manuals have to be ready for the staff to use. These are expected to be ready by the end of April and then by mid May audiovisual media will raise awareness on the existence of call center.

2. Public information campaign in the media. A plan has been made on this and a section on digital switchover has been started on AMA's website. An informative brochure will be drafted, expected by end of April.

3. Organization of conferences to raise awareness on digital switchover. Three regional conferences and one national will be organized, but the time will depend on determination of regulation and criteria that will be presented in the conferences.

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