

Albania 2013 Report

European Commission

Chapter 10: Information society and media

Alignment with the acquis in the area of electronic communications and information and communications technologies (ICT) has progressed; amendments to the Law on Electronic Communications were adopted in October 2012. Competition has been enhanced by reducing the fees paid by companies to operate in the market. The Agency for Electronic and Postal Communications (AKEP) completed the third round of tariff reductions for mobile networks. Further progress has been made with implementing competitive safeguards: fixed number portability was introduced in September 2012 and the incumbent published its wholesale broadband access reference offer in early 2013. A third UMTS/3G license was granted at the end of 2012.

The draft law on rights of way remains to be adopted. The emergency number 112 has not been implemented due to a lack of funds for setting up an integrated model for the 112 number and public safety answering points. AKEP's administrative capacity and resources remain weak. Mobile usage remains high with subscription penetration at 119% in July, while mobile broadband is at an early stage of development. Penetration of fixed telephone and broadband are among the lowest in the region. The fixed broadband penetration per population reached 7.6% according to the latest available data.

In the field of information society services, the GovNet network infrastructure has been extended and 'public key' infrastructure, providing trusted communication between government systems and users, has been set up. Amendments were made to the law on electronic commerce to further align it with the E-Commerce Directive. Alignment with the acquis on conditional access has progressed, with the adoption of the audiovisual media service law in March 2013. A national plan on broadband was adopted in May. The National Agency for the Information Society has improved its technical capacity by building a public data centre and setting up a new e-government portal and an interoperability platform to help provide e-government services for citizens and business. Electronic identity management for businesses has not yet been standardised but is different for each e-service (e.g. procurement, tax), hampering the development of e-services.

In the field of audiovisual policy, a law on Audiovisual Media Services, aimed at the alignment of the media legal framework with the acquis, was adopted in March 2013. The appointment procedure of the members of the media regulatory authority - Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA), provided for by the law, does not fully guarantee their independence. Implementation of the digital switchover strategy has halted, due to a court case of broadcasting operators. Efforts should be put into the timely implementation of the digital switchover strategy due to be completed in June 2015. Further efforts are required to free illegally used frequencies. AMA still lacks sufficient capacity and concerns remain over its independence. The public service broadcaster's editorial independence and fee collection system have not improved.

Conclusion

There has been some progress in the field of the information society and media, particularly in aligning legislation on audiovisual media services and electronic communications with the acquis and enhancing competition in the electronic communications market. Legal uncertainty on the rights-of-way regime continues. The independence of the media and of its regulatory authority still gives rise to concern, and the digital switchover has been further delayed, putting at stake the timely implementation of the process. Overall, preparations are moderately advanced.