

*December 5, 2014*

## Parliament elects five members of KDRTSH

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The Parliament elected on December 4 in a plenary session five members of the Steering Council of public broadcaster RTSH. The new members are: Xhemal Mato, former RTSH journalist and environmental activist, Valbona Sulce, former journalist and human rights activist, Helidon Haliti, painter and photographer, Xhelil Aliu, former journalist of Radio Tirana, and Vladimir Grosha, painter. The new members were voted only by Members of Parliament from the ruling majority, as the opposition MPs continue to boycott all parliamentary activities. The short listing process in the Parliamentary Commission on Media also was done only by the ruling majority MPs, after failed appeals to the opposition to come to the parliament and resolve the deadlock.

The mandate of all members of the Steering Council of RTSH expired one year ago, while some mandates were not valid as long as two years before. As a result, the ruling majority said it had no other choice but to go ahead with the election process, as this boycott was also paralyzing the institutions. Similarly as to the regulator, Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA,) the ruling majority has stated that the five remaining members of Steering Council of RTSH can be shortlisted from the opposition MPs when they return to the commission.

The ruling majority has also declared that the process of electing the chair of the Steering Council of RTSH is planned to start soon. According to the law, the chair is elected no later than 10 days after the procedure for election of Steering Council members is completed. The Parliamentary Commission on Media shortlists four candidates for the chair and the opposition MPs in the commission are expected to eliminate two of the four shortlisted candidates, while the final two remaining candidates are elected by simple majority in the parliament.

The election of new members of Steering Council was opposed by Vangjel Dule, chair of the Party of the Union of Human Rights, also deputy Speaker of the Parliament. He stated that it was unacceptable that a body like the Steering Council, which has to represent interests of all Albanian citizens in the public broadcaster, does not have a representative of the ethnic minorities. Prime Minister Edi Rama replied by stating that such a requirement existed in the old law, the Law on Radio and Television, but during the drafting of the existing Law on Audiovisual Media such a requirement had been removed.

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