
BIH GOVERNMENT BACKS NEW CROAT BROADCASTER

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23.01.2013 SETimes The Croatian channel would be the fourth public broadcasting effort in BiH. Analysts believe a proposal to create an Croatian RTV channel in Bosnia and Herzegovina would, if enacted, help establish the equality of Croats in BiH in public and electronic media. The channel, according to Ivo Miro Jovic, vice president of the Croatian Democratic Union of BiH and a former member of the BiH presidency, is a step forward for democratisation in BiH, but he stressed that forming a Croatian channel will be a long process. "I must remind you that even national minorities in Europe have their own channel and our mouth is full of Europe in the past 10 years," Jovic told SETimes. "Croatian public service will mean that the Croats in BiH can cultivate their tradition, national language, culture ... and be equal with [the two other ethnicities] in BiH." The draft law was approved in a January 11th meeting of the BiH Council of Ministers. The channel would have 20 percent of net profit from advertisements and 20 percent of the fees RTV paid to the state. Three public broadcasters currently operate in the country: Bosnian-Herzegovinian Radio-Television (BHRT), Radio-Television of Republika Srpska (RTRS) and Radio-Television of the Federation BiH (RTVFBiH). Ivan Sijakovic, professor of sociology at the University of Banja Luka, said the Croatian people in BiH will welcome the addition. "This will definitely relax the relations in BiH The [Croats] are, after all, constituent people and it is normal to have the same rights as any other people in BiH. I speak exclusively about citizens. When it comes to politicians, they will likely take all the credit for it," Sijakovic told SETimes. Besides the Croatian parties, the two Serbian parties in the coalition, the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) and the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), supported the formation of the channel, although the SDS said it would not accept the plan if it meant any loss of revenue from RTRS. The two Bosniak parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Alliance for a Better Future (SBB), said they would vote against the plan when it comes to parliament. Goran Filandra, 30, an IT manager from Mostar, told SETimes that the founding of Croatian television will stop the process of marginalisation of Croats in BiH. "I have nothing against other nationalities in BiH. Those are my neighbours, colleagues. But it's about time that we, as Croats, to stop be treated as a minority in this country and get what we belong as an equal citizens of this state," Josip Sarenac, 24, a political science student from Ljubuski, told SETimes. Criticism of the proposed channel came from the Social Democratic Party (SDA), which said BiH is too small to operate four public broadcasters. "The establishment or division of the public broadcaster according to imagined ethnic lines is the shortest path to new entities and the degradation of the state," the party said in a statement.