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ARTICLE 19

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Montenegro: Draft Law on Public Service Broadcasting Should be Adopted by Montenegrin Parliament

ARTICLE 19 calls on the parliament of Montenegro to adopt the draft law on Public Service Broadcasting.

ARTICLE 19 supports the adoption of the draft Law on Public Service Broadcasting that is currently before the parliament of Montenegro. The draft Law came into being after a public debate involving civil society, media representatives, the public service broadcaster (RTCG) and international media experts. As part of this consultation process, ARTICLE 19 provided comments on an earlier version of the draft Law at a roundtable held in Podgorica in September 2008.

According to the draft Law, a fixed amount of 1.2% of the annual budget of Montenegro will be redirected to fund the core activities of the public service broadcaster (Article 16). The adoption of this provision would not undermine the independence of the public service broadcaster nor would it mean the establishment of a state television – as argued by some critics of the draft Law. Indeed, such a system of financing through the allocation of a fixed percentage of the budget is a widely accepted practice in Europe and beyond. The draft Law also proposes a new mechanism for the prompt appointment of members of the public service broadcaster by which an entire list of nominees will be submitted to parliament for approval (Article 38).

If adopted, the draft Law, including these provisions, will serve to strengthen the system of public service broadcasting in Montenegro. If the parliament of Montenegro chooses not to adopt the draft Law, however, the public service broadcaster will not receive public funding next year and its existence will be threatened. ARTICLE 19, therefore, urges members of the parliament of Montenegro to vote to enact the draft Law on Public Service Broadcasting.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

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- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.