

V THE DIGITALIZATION PROCESS

In early June, the Ministry of Culture, Media and Information Society released new Rulebook on the Switchover from Analog to Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting and Access to Multiplex in Terrestrial Digital Broadcasting, a document of paramount importance for the digitalization process. The new Rulebook was necessary after the adoption of the amendments to the Digitalization Strategy in March and hence these two texts were almost simultaneously developed. However, after RATEL submitted its objections concerning the procedure of adopting the Rulebook, the Draft was withdrawn, only to be adopted three months after the adoption of the Strategy. The Rulebook in its current text foresees the distribution of broadcasting channels by coverage zone for the first two multiplexes that will be put into operation during the switchover to digital broadcasting. The Rulebook also envisages that the setting up of new digital networks and additional multiplexes (if any) will be considered only after the completion of the switchover process, in keeping with the Law on Electronic Communications, while the additional multiplexes will be established only where technically and commercially appropriate. According to the Rulebook, the switchover will take place by stages, instead of in just one day in the entire territory of Serbia, as provided for in the former Rulebook from February 2011. Furthermore, the Rulebook governs the procedure for the replacement of broadcasting licenses so as for them to remain valid after the switchover. After the amendments to the Digitalization Strategy, the adoption of the Rulebook constitutes a new step in redefining the legal framework regulating the whole process. The next step is supposed to be the adoption of the Switchover Plan, a document foreseeing the timeline of the switchover stages in each of the regions. The adoption of the Switchover Plan, under the Strategy, shall be preceded by consultations between the Ministry, RATEL, the RBA, the public company "Broadcasting Equipment and Communications", public service broadcasters and holders of broadcasting licenses. The consultations are expected to commence shortly after the new Government is constituted.