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The full text of the report, as well as a press release, are available (as of 11 October) at <http://www.eumap.org>, <http://www.soros.hr> and <http://www.irmo.hr>  
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### For immediate release

## **Broadcasting reform and independence need to be consolidated in Croatia**

*Zagreb and Budapest, 2 December 2005* – Television in Croatia has undergone major reforms in recent years, but the momentum of change needs to be maintained if public broadcasting is to become genuinely independent, and journalists in both public and private stations protected from both commercial and political pressures. Private television has become increasingly diverse, although ownership transparency remains poor. The establishment in 2003 of the country's main broadcasting regulator, the Council of Electronic Media (CEM), strengthened the country's regulatory system, and the CEM has so far been able to retain its independence.

These are the main findings of the Croatia country report included in the series of monitoring reports *Television across Europe: regulation, policy and independence*, released today in Zagreb. Produced by the Open Society Institute in cooperation with the Open Society - Croatia, the report calls on Croatia's government and media community to consolidate recent reforms, and puts forward 12 concrete recommendations.

Until the late 1990s, government pressures on Croatian Radio-Television (HTV) delayed the pace of Croatia's European integration. There has since been major progress, and the government elected in 2000 has generally refrained from exerting pressure on HTV. HTV's independence and professional standards improved, with analyses of programming showing a decrease in biased reporting and hate speech.

The OSI report stresses the need for continued scrutiny and monitoring by the media community — by professional organisations and the international community, particularly the European Commission and the Council of Europe — to ensure the independence from political interference for the public broadcasters, and also the national regulatory structures.

The report also calls on Croatia's Parliament and government to continue to develop media policy that safeguards editorial freedom, ensures diversity of content in broadcasting, and assures the continued independent funding of HTV, so that it can continue to contribute to cultural diversity and creativity in the Croatian media space. The report also urges policy makers to take steps to develop media policy and strategies on new media technologies, particularly digitalisation, and to include experts from NGOs and academia in this process.

Over past years, HTV has retained one of the highest audience shares of all public broadcasters in Europe. But in the last two years, the station's response to increasing competition from private television stations — particularly RTL Televizija — has been a commercialisation of its output. The report calls on HTV to devise a public service-oriented response to the trend of commercialisation. It also urges the CEM to consistently monitor stations' fulfilment of television programming obligations. Over the last six months, the CEM has started to carry out some monitoring; this is an encouraging development, and such monitoring should be continued in the future on a regular basis.

Commercial broadcasting is now diverse and pluralistic, and the two national commercial broadcasters (RTL Televizija and Nova TV) are owned by foreign investors (RTL and CME respectively). However, there is limited transparency on key data, such as revenue and advertising income. Credible data on audience share is also not available. The OSI report urges the CEM, to ensure that broadcasters comply with all legal requirements for transparency of information and provision of credible data.

### **Note to editors**

This report is part of a series of 20 country reports monitoring “*Television across Europe: regulation, policy and independence*”. The reports were prepared by EUMAP, the EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program of the Open Society Institute, in cooperation with OSI's Network Media Program. All reports are available online at <http://www.eumap.org>. More information on the Open Society Institute is available at <http://www.soros.org>.

The Croatia report was developed in cooperation with the Institute for International Relations (IMO), Zagreb, and the Open Society Institute – Croatia. The Open Society Institute – Croatia is a non-profit private foundation, part of the OSI network. The IMO is an independent, non profit scientific institute, and its Department for Culture and Communication is devoted to research on media and cultural policy and developments.