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## Television in Poland requires major reforms

*Warsaw and Budapest, 1 December 2005* — The Polish television sector continues to suffer from systemic politicisation. Public television in Poland is lacking a clear role and is increasingly commercial, thus creating a distorted playing field for commercial broadcasters.

These are the main findings of the Poland country report included in the series of monitoring reports *Television across Europe: regulation, policy and independence*, released today in Warsaw. Drafted by Andrzej Krajewski and produced by the Open Society Institute (OSI), with organisational support from the Stefan Batory Foundation, the report provides a detailed analysis of the situation of television in Poland. The most comprehensive analysis ever published on broadcasting in Poland, the report also offers 10 concrete recommendations addressed at bringing the television sector in line with citizens' needs.

Poland has not yet managed to formulate and implement a clear audiovisual policy based on consensus across the political spectrum. According to Andrzej Krajewski, "This is due primarily to the systemic politicisation of the broadcasting regulator, the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT), whose members have been chosen overwhelmingly on the basis of political party affiliation."

As a result, the public broadcaster, Telewizja Polska (TVP), has been subject to systematic political interference in management and programme content. Moreover, official reports have confirmed serious irregularities in the licensing activities of the KRRiT. Broadcasting regulation was also at the heart of the biggest corruption scandal in Poland's democratic history — the 'Rywingate' Affair — involving attempts to secure bribes in return for changes in draft broadcasting legislation.

Although the affair has led to the changes in the composition of the KRRiT, and of TVP's Supervisory Council and Board, and to curbs on the politicisation of TVP's programming, changes have been limited so far. The OSI report released today calls on the government and Parliament to fundamentally re-think the role of the KRRiT, alter its appointment procedures to ensure the appointment of politically neutral professionals, and take measures to ensure that licensing procedures are transparent and fair.

The current state of affairs has prevented an effective discussion of what the role and vision of public service television should be, and how that should be pursued. Already the dominant broadcaster, TVP has become increasingly commercialised, undermining its public service rationale. The special situation of TVP results in an advertising market that is seriously distorted, as private broadcasters suffer unfair competition for advertising from TVP. The OSI report calls on the KRRiT to commission an independent review of TVP's advertising practices and on the anti-monopoly authority to strictly enforce competition law. In parallel, the report stresses the need to reform the current system of funding through license fees to ensure that financing is transparent, predictable and sufficient for the public broadcaster to fulfill a clearly defined public service mission.

The OSI report presents a complete picture of the situation of broadcasting in Poland, looking at both legislation and practice. It analyses the regulatory set up, public service broadcasting and private television. The report contains a set of recommendations directed at further deepening the reforms which Poland has successfully engaged in over the last few years.

**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>.