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Press Release (for immediate release)

Disappointing trends in Slovenian television

Ljubljana and Budapest, 1 March 2006 – Despite far-reaching reform of its broadcast sector since 1991, Slovenia – Europe’s most prosperous new democracy – recently adopted regressive broadcasting legislation. Yet an important analytic report on television in Slovenia, presented today in Ljubljana, finds that this worrying development is consistent with a visible trend of high-level reluctance to abandon political influence over the management, editors and journalists of the public service broadcaster, RTV Slovenia. As well as showing that political parties and governments have tried to exert such influence, the report also finds that ownership transparency is lacking in the commercial broadcast sector.

This report is part of a series of monitoring reports published last October as *Television across Europe: regulation, policy and independence*. It has been prepared by Marko Milosavljevic and produced by the Open Society Institute, Budapest in cooperation with the Peace Institute, Ljubljana.

According to the report, the future of public service broadcasting in Slovenia remains unclear. The programming and supervising councils of RTV Slovenia, the broadcaster’s governing and supervising bodies, remain under clear political influence, despite the fact that in the programming council most of its members represent civil society institutions such as universities and associations, rather than State or political structures.

The Law on RTV Slovenia, adopted by Parliament last July and narrowly approved by referendum in September 2005, increased the role of the Government and Parliament in overseeing RTV Slovenia, and appointing its key personnel in governing and supervising bodies. For these reasons, the law affronts the Council of Europe’s standards of public service broadcasting independence.

This development is especially disappointing, given that Slovenia has been a regional leader in many aspects of democratic transition. Neighbouring countries may conclude that accession to the EU need not prevent a government from constraining the media.

The conclusions of the report presented today indicate that also the Slovenia’s commercial television sector is troubled. No fewer than 35 privately owned channels compete for limited advertising revenue. Yet few of these channels carry significant news or current affairs reporting or originate quality programming in other strands. Their entertainment schedules depend heavily on low-cost imports and licensed formats.

More positively, RTV Slovenia and the most successful private channel, Pop TV, offer plenty of news and current affairs, including investigative reporting which has exposed important cases of corruption.

The ownership of many commercial channels is not transparent. Publicly available information in the Media Register is limited and often out-of-date, and the relevant legislation does not require the disclosure of precise information about ownership shares. The report recommends that new legislation be introduced to tackle the problem of excessive cross-ownership and other forms of monopolisation. It also calls for the powers of Slovenia's regulatory bodies be clarified - and, in some respects, increased - in order to obtain better compliance by broadcasters with their legal obligations, and to deal more effectively with ownership issues.

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 Slovenia report was prepared by Marko Milosavljevic and produced in cooperation with the Peace Institute, Ljubljana. The Peace Institute focuses on peace studies and issues of violence, racism and political conflicts, gender studies, media politics, cultural studies and political and social practice. More information on the Peace Institute is available at <http://www.mirovni-institut.si>.