

Ukraine: the head of the Security Service of Ukraine gains control over the national Television Council

On 29 June, Ukraine's Parliament added new members to the National Television and Radio Council. All candidates put forward by the opposition and relevant non-governmental organisations were rejected. Three out of the four new members of the Council are linked to Valery Khoroshkovsky, head of the Security Service of Ukraine, who is also the chairman of the supervisory board of Ukraine's largest TV station Inter. Since two of the eight members of the Council are already linked to Khoroshkovsky, the parliament's decision can be seen as a significant threat to the freedom of the electronic media in Ukraine.

The National Television and Radio Council is a constitutional body which grants licences to radio and TV broadcasters and enforces media legislation. The Council also has a significant influence on assignment of frequencies to broadcasters. It consists of eight members, four of whom are nominated by the president of Ukraine and the other four by parliament. The quorum is six members, which means that, as a consequence of the recent decisions, Khoroshkovsky has gained full control over this body.

Valery Khoroshkovsky is a businessman and politician. In the past, he was minister of the economy and European integration (in Viktor Yanukovich's government of 2002–2004). He was nominated head of the Security Service of Ukraine in March 2010. He is believed to be linked to Serhiy Lovochkin, head of the Presidential Administration. At the same time, since 2005, he has owned (being officially the chairman of the supervisory board) U.A. Inter Media Group, which in turn owns the key Ukrainian private TV station Inter. Now he has obtained a new tool for influencing the media market, which he will be able to use both for limiting his business competitors and for influencing the editorial policy of the media in the interest of President Yanukovich and the head of Presidential Administration. <TAO>