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## WHAT RESULTS SHOW?

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**In Uzbekistan, the procedure for licensing electronic media has more negative aspects than positive ones.**

1998: *Moy Gorod* and *RDES* (Europe+) Tashkent radio stations were closed; 2000: *ALC TV* company was closed. These were the stations that enjoyed particular popularity. In late 2000, *Grand* television and radio company (Tashkent) was rejected a license for telecasting. These events "architected" by the Interdepartmental Coordination Commission (ICC) marked the end of the year and the end of the 20th century for Uzbekistan's broadcasters. August 1998 was a certain "new milestone" in Uzbekistan's electronic media development. Since that time, they fell under full control by the state, personalized by the specially-created structure: the Interdepartmental Coordination Commission (ICC). To put it simply, its function can be identified as "allowing or disallowing broadcasting licensing." The official name is long and vague. What has ICC done since August 1998 to-date? There are 23 non-state TV and broadcasting companies. "The commission believes that everything has been done to create conditions for developing free entrepreneurship in this field. Documents are processed in due time as per the regulation, sometimes we breach it by meeting the licensed entities half-way and make allowances if they fail to provide a non-primary reference note which we permit them to fax to us," said Anatoli Jikae, ICC deputy chairman and deputy director general of the Uzbek Post and Telecommunications Agency.

### CHECKING ON THE INDEPENDENT STATIONS

However, not everything is so cloudless. It suffices to recollect the story concerning the *ALC* television company closure in Urgench. The republican ICC had asked the local commission's opinion before making a final decision on whether or not to license telecasting. So, the local authorities used that chance to pay off old scores with the "zealous" TV people who had disturbed the local authorities with their reports, and had used all possible means whereby the license could be refused to them. "People could speak openly about their problems to the camera, now they have been deprived of this chance," Shukhrat Babajanov, *ALC* company director, said. The republican ICC was satisfied with an opinion of its provincial office, without verifying the information. Late Summer and early Fall is a traditional time for the ICC working group representatives to visit the republic's non-state radio and TV companies. This check-action on the Broadcast schedule, station security and equipment operation is always awaited with alarm, but also with a hope for its soonest finalization. Anything might happen. In Fall 2000, during the check of the *Grand* radio station, ICC representatives prescribed that DJs must prepare their comments beforehand and the editor-in-chief must approve them before going on the air. *Grand* radio station's lawyer, Leonid Muratsidis, expressed his doubt as to whether similar instructions exist for other stations, but, according to him, "we could try to sort out the situation. I'm just afraid that this could impair the reputation of our station and we are not going to lose our license."

## **NOT MUCH CREATIVITY IN PROVINCIAL TV**

*Grand* station has had its radio broadcasting license extended, but it has been refused the implementation of the second part of its project: licensed for telecasting. Officially, ICC has stated that "the would-be telecasting by *Grand* station would cover a part of Kazakhstan. This question is now being discussed with our Kazakh counterparts. Anyway, this is not a final refusal to the *Grand* station. Probably it will have to switch to some other technical parameters which fact could facilitate the solution to this question. There is no other implication in this question." However, numerous questions arise among the broadcasters and the electronic media owners and founders. There is another aspect of concern for the non-state electronic media workers. They are bound to admit the *Uzbek Television and Broadcasting Company (UzTBC)* as the leader. Mr. Jikaev explains this in the following way: "Unfortunately our provincial broadcasters are mainly engaged in retransmission. There is no great creative work in that because radio and television are valuable for their own products, individuality and their own vision of the issues. For instance, the Uzbek Television and Broadcasting Company seeks this. However, the non-state sector representatives take it as their competitor and do not seek to approach its workers for advice. This is misunderstanding: they are only formally competitors. In addition, the *UzTBC* directors are ICC members. This is a state governmental commission responsible for maintaining order in broadcasting. Probably there is some rational kernel in these words, but their arrogance is antagonizing. In addition, the TV and radio audience polls witness in favour of cabled TV engaged in retransmitting Russia's channels as being more attractive in comparison to, for example, the programmes of *UzTBC*'s first and third channels. So, one speaking about the role of the Interdepartmental Coordination Commission in the electronic media development could hardly refer to it as positive. It hampers its development rather than facilitating same.