

EU set to fund parallel media structures

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The European Union says it is prepared to fund parallel media supervisory structures if it believes the Zimbabwe Media Commission's mandate is compromised.

The EU had offered €500 000 to fund ZMC's operations provided certain conditions were met.

In a project document submitted to ZMC through UNESCO, the EU said the political situation in Zimbabwe was likely to inhibit media reforms and in that case the EU would shift its support to another organisation.

The EU argued that because of the impending general elections, there was a possibility that government could disband ZMC and replace it with another organisation.

The 27-member block said the international community would not extend its funding to such an organisation.

"The strategy is to maintain the three pillars of the objectives of the project -- institutional, professional and legal capacity development.

"If it is regarded (by the EU) as necessary the support could be shifted from the ZMC to another structure that could still be supported by the international community.

"In that case, the project would be restructured to support the institutional, professional and legal capacity development of the country's media stakeholders," reads part of the document.

Government sources said claims by the EU showed that its funding was designed to achieve certain interests favourable to it.

"A close analysis of the whole deal shows that the EU is not honestly committed to fund ZMC's operations.

"This is the reason why they wanted to convey their funding through an arm of the United Nations," said the source.

The source said constitutional bodies should remain autonomous and such autonomy usually diminishes if they were exposed to foreign funding.

The source added that certain government ministries have to be consulted on the issues of foreign funding of constitutional

bodies.

These ministries are Media, Information and Publicity as the parent ministry, Justice and Legal Affairs for administrative purposes and Foreign Affairs.

"The ministries involved in the approval of such funding like in this case are administered by Zanu-PF ministers, making the EU uncomfortable," said the source.

According to the UNESCO document, the EU claimed that it wanted ZMC's operations to conform to what it referred to as "international best practices".

One of the aspects regarded to be an international practice is to do away with registration of journalists and media houses. Media experts said that was awkward because all EU member-states register journalists and media houses.

As part of the proposed 30-month funding by the EU, the European bloc will provide fuel to ZMC, but not vehicles.

The funding will also provide for the purchase of office spare parts and other consumables. The EU said there should be constant monitoring of ZMC operations through a project co-ordinator that would be resident in Zimbabwe.

Apart from dealing with ZMC, the co-ordinator will also interact with other key stakeholders in the broader society.

Source: allAfrica.com

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