[DE] KEF recommends significantly lower licence fee increase

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In its 25th report, which was presented and submitted to the Chairman of the Broadcasting Commission (*Rundfunkkommission*) of the federal states on 20 February 2026, the Commission for Determining the Financial Requirements of Broadcasters (*Kommission zur Ermittlung des Finanzbedarfs der Rundfunkanstalten* – KEF) recommended only a small increase in the German public broadcasting licence fee from the current EUR 18.36 to EUR 18.64 per month.

The licence fee is determined in accordance with the Interstate Broadcasting Financing Treaty (*Rundfunkfinanzierungsstaatsvertrag* – RFinStV) and can only be changed with the approval of all 16 state parliaments. To this end, the KEF reports to the state governments every two years on the financial situation of the state broadcasters that make up the German Association of Public Service Broadcasters (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* – ARD), *Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen* (ZDF) and *Deutschlandradio*. The KEF alternately prepares licence fee reports containing recommendations on the level of the licence fee for the following four years and interim reports that examine its forecasts and documents any changes. The procedure for determining the level of the licence fee comprises three stages. First, the broadcasters report their financial requirements to the KEF on a regular basis (first stage). The KEF then reviews the reported financial requirements in accordance with the principles of efficiency and economy (second stage). Based on this, the KEF submits a proposal to the Broadcasting Commission. In accordance with Section 7(2) RFinStV, the KEF's proposal forms the basis for the final decision of the state governments and state parliaments to amend the Interstate Treaty accordingly (third stage).

In its 24th report, published in 2024, the KEF had recommended increasing the licence fee to EUR 18.94 from 1 January 2025. However, the federal states had refused to ratify this, partly due to high reserves at ARD, ZDF and Deutschlandradio as well as pending public service broadcasting reforms. As a result, the previous level of EUR 18.36 per month had remained in place. In November 2024, ARD and ZDF lodged a constitutional complaint with the Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*, Case No. 1 BvR 2524/24 and others) against the inaction of the federal states, and these proceedings are still

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pending.

In its 25th report, which is more than 360 pages long, the KEF recommended an increase of only EUR 0.28 from 1 January 2027 instead of the EUR 0.58 recommended in its previous report, which would have applied to the entire period from 2025 to 2028. The report takes into account the influence of various factors on the licence fee calculation over the last two years, including geopolitical and domestic political developments, migration, the impact of the Special Fund for Infrastructure and Climate Neutrality (*Sondervermögen für Infrastruktur und Klimaneutralität*) as well as changes in the housing market and capital market interest rates. The significantly lower increase is due to the fact that the KEF is forecasting much higher revenues until 2028 due to more newly registered housing and higher income, which had not been foreseeable in the previous report. However, it is also making reductions totalling EUR 1.275 billion to the notified financial requirements. For the 2025-28 period, it predicts total funding-relevant expenditure of EUR 42.01 billion, an increase of EUR 3.5 billion or an average of 2.2% per year compared with the 2021-24 period.

According to the KEF's assessment, the new Interstate Treaty on Reform (*Reformstaatsvertrag*), which is intended to make public service broadcasters more digital, lean and modern, could not have influenced the calculation of requirements, as it had only come into force on 1 December 2025, after the financial requirements had been notified. Accordingly, the KEF does not expect the reforms to have any significant financial impact until 2029, partly due to long-term licensing agreements, production orders and employee contracts, as well as structural reforms and staff reduction programmes that have already been factored into the licence fee calculation.

Link zum 25. KEF-Bericht

https://kef-online.de/fileadmin/kef/Dateien/Berichte/25._KEF-Bericht.pdf

Link to the 25th KEF report

https://kef-online.de/fileadmin/kef/Dateien/Berichte/25._KEF-Bericht.pdf

Link zur Pressemitteilung der KEF

https://kef-online.de/presse/detail/kef-empfiehlt-deutlich-geringere-anhebung-des-rundfunkbeitrags

Link to the KEF press release

https://kef-online.de/presse/detail/kef-empfiehlt-deutlich-geringere-anhebung-des-rundfunkbeitrags

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Link zur Zusatzinformation zur Pressemitteilung der KEF

https://kef-online.de/fileadmin/kef/Dateien/Pressemitteilungen/25._KEF-Bericht_Zusatzinformation_zur_PM.pdf

Link to additional information on the KEF press release

https://kef-online.de/fileadmin/kef/Dateien/Pressemitteilungen/25._KEF-Bericht_Zusatzinformation_zur_PM.pdf

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