[AM] Restrictions on harmful programmes enforced

IRIS 2026-5:1/13

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On 16 April 2026, the National Assembly (parliament) of Armenia adopted a law to expand and detail the notion of “abuse of audiovisual broadcasts”, especially in the event of their dissemination by “network operators”. The support for the bill to amend the relevant provisions of the 2020 Statute “On Audiovisual Media” was significant, with 58 deputies voting for, three against, and 15 who abstained in the final second vote (for more background information, see IRIS 2021-1:1/2 and IRIS 2026-3:1/2).

As per Article 3 of the Statute “On Audiovisual Media”, a network operator is “a natural or legal person which owns, under the right of ownership or other right, a cable or other network (except for cases when limited frequency resource is used) and ensures the technical operation of the given infrastructure”.

The new statute significantly amends Article 9 (“Prohibition of misuse of audiovisual programmes”) of the Statute “On Audiovisual Media”. The major changes include detailing the types of programmes that are prohibited, specifically those that “call for acts prohibited by the law” and specifically prohibiting war propaganda, “propaganda inciting violence and cruelty”, and the “dissemination of information inciting national or racial or sexual or religious hatred, as well as instilling, encouraging or justifying discrimination on the basis of age or disability or other personal or social characteristics”.

In addition, Article 9 now contains a ban on the “dissemination of content that interferes with the internal political life of the Republic of Armenia in foreign audiovisual programmes”. The Television and Radio Commission, an independent national media regulator, must establish the specific criteria for identifying information that encourages or justifies such actions.

Certain provisions of Article 49 (“Activities of persons that possess a licence to act as a network operator”), were added to the requirements related to the retransmission of programmes of foreign origin. These operators shall, in advance of such activity, submit a specific notification to the regulator in the same way that other distributors of audiovisual programming must do (as prescribed in Article 54). They shall also cease retransmission within 24 hours after being notified by the media regulator of the initiation of administrative proceedings regarding the apparent violation of the provisions of Article 9. The penalty for

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non-compliance with the requirement is the imposition of a fine in the amount of five hundred times the established minimum wage and shall entail the cancellation of the approval of the prior notification granted to the network operator.

The revised Article 57 (“Fines”) streamlines and simplifies the current system of imposing and calculating the administrative fines on audiovisual media actors. A new article, 58.1, has been added to provide for the reasons for the suspension and termination of the network operator’s permits ("Licences").

On 17 April the amendments were signed into law by the President of Armenia, and officially published the next day. They came into force on 28 April 2026. The specific criteria for identifying prohibited information shall be developed by the regulator within four months.

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Implementation of amendments and additions to the Statute “On Audiovisual Media”, Statute of the Republic of Armenia, 17 April 2026, No. HO-133-N

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Statute on Audiovisual Media, Republic of Armenia, No. ZR-395

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