

[DE] Berlin Administrative Court confirms lawfulness of media authority's ban on *Russia Today*

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In a ruling of 30 June 2026, the Berlin Administrative Court (*Verwaltungsgericht Berlin* – VG) dismissed the claim brought by RT DE Productions GmbH challenging the German media regulator's 2022 objection to and prohibition of the *RT DE* television channel. The court rejected the main argument put forward by the Berlin-based broadcaster that it was not the provider itself but that its parent company, TV Novosti, based in Russia, was the provider. Consequently, the ban on *RT DE* which, it is undisputed, did not hold a licence in Germany was also deemed lawful.

RT DE is the German-language channel of the Russian state broadcaster RT (at that time still known as *Russia Today*) and is therefore one of the broadcasters subject to EU-wide sanctions. Transmission of its content has been banned since 2022 to prevent the spread of propaganda and disinformation regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, the ban on *RT DE* in Germany was based not on the EU-wide sanctions imposed by the European Council, but on German media law. *RT DE* had already commenced operations in Germany in 2014 – initially on a small scale and predominantly online via video-sharing platforms – and had eventually taken to the airwaves as a full-service channel via satellite and various online distribution channels at the end of 2021. However, no broadcasting licence was ever applied for in Germany and TV Novosti merely attempted, unsuccessfully, to obtain a corresponding licence in Luxembourg. Under Section 52 of the Inter-State Media Treaty (*Medienstaatsvertrag* – MStV), however, such a licence is mandatory for the provision of broadcasting services. In the case of *RT DE*, the granting of a licence would have been highly unlikely, as such licences may not be awarded to states (including foreign ones) or their affiliated undertakings. The Berlin-Brandenburg Media Authority (*Medienanstalt Berlin-Brandenburg* – mabb) had therefore initiated court proceedings (see IRIS 2022-2:1/19). In February 2022, the broadcaster was prohibited from broadcasting in Germany by the Commission for Licensing and Supervision (*Kommission für Zulassung und Aufsicht* – ZAK), acting on behalf of the 14 German state media authorities (see IRIS 2022-3:1/23). The decision was addressed to RT DE Productions GmbH, based in Berlin, which had been identified by the ZAK as the entity responsible for content. RT DE Productions GmbH had contested this, arguing primarily that it was merely a producer and supplier of individual programmes, whereas TV Novosti was the broadcaster.

The Berlin Administrative Court did not accept this argument and dismissed the claim. It found that the mabb and the ZAK had rightly regarded the claimant as the broadcaster of the *RT DE* channel, which is subject to a licensing requirement. Before launching the channel, the claimant had repeatedly presented itself as a broadcaster in public statements. It had also stated that it bore ultimate editorial responsibility for the broadcast content in Germany – and not in Russia. In the court's view, this was also supported by job advertisements in which RT DE Productions GmbH described itself as a TV broadcaster and sought staff required for such a broadcaster. The Berlin Administrative Court rejected RT DE's objection that these statements had been made by untrained staff and were therefore irrelevant.

The decision is not yet final. However, it is rather unlikely that an application for leave to appeal will be lodged, since *RT DE* ceased broadcasting in April 2022 and is now in liquidation with no active business operations.

Pressemitteilung des Verwaltungsgerichts Berlin

<https://www.berlin.de/gerichte/verwaltungsgericht/presse/pressemitteilungen/2026/pressemitteilung.1688011.php>

Press release of the Berlin Administrative Court

