[IS] Media Commission fines podcast presenter for failure to register

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On 26 August 2026, Iceland's Media Commission (*Fjölmiðlanefnd*) decided that the podcast *Ein Pæling* was a media outlet subject to registration under the Media Act No. 38/2011. It found that the presenter, Þórarinn Hjartarson, had breached Article 14(1) by failing to register the podcast and imposed an administrative fine of ISK 500 000. The decision was published on 28 August.

The case began after the presenter asked the Commission in November 2025 how to obtain a radio broadcasting licence. The Commission replied that the podcast should be registered. The presenter disputed this, arguing that the programmes were interviews and opinion pieces, that neither he nor the company had a newsroom, and that he did not work as a journalist. He also questioned whether the podcast met the statutory definitions of a media outlet and podcast. After an initial assessment and further exchanges, the Commission maintained its position.

Under the Media Act, a media outlet regularly provides a media service whose principal purpose, or a separable part, is to communicate content to the public under editorial responsibility in order to inform, educate or entertain. In assessing *Ein Pæling*, the Commission considered editorial control, regular publication, public availability and the programme's purpose. It found editorial control in the presenter's selection of topics and guests and his direction of interviews. A separate editorial team was unnecessary: the act permits an individual to operate a media outlet. Distribution through Spotify or other platforms did not remove editorial responsibility from the podcast's operator.

The Commission noted that new episodes usually appeared several times a week in Icelandic and were available through Spotify, Apple Podcasts, YouTube and the podcast's website. Listeners could also pay for early, advertisement-free access. Sponsorships, subscriptions and voluntary contributions demonstrated a financial benefit, although the Commission assessed the statutory criteria as a whole. It concluded that the podcast met the definition of a media outlet and required registration. Article 14 of the act requires a provider outside the licensing regime to notify the Commission of its activity before it begins; the written notification includes information about the provider, its responsible person, editorial policy and ownership. Article 14 also requires providers to notify the Commission of changes to the information supplied at registration.

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https://fjolmidlanefnd.is/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/Akvordun-4_2026-Skraning-hladvarpsins-Einnar-Paelingar.pdf

Decision No. 4/2026: Registration obligation of the Ein Pæling podcast

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