[LV] Parliament broadens film definitions and funding criteria for coproductions

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Sergei Bondarev
Independent expert

On 22 October 2026, the Latvian parliament, the *Saeima*, unanimously adopted amendments to the Film Law (Bill 1589/Lp14) at an urgent second and final reading. The amendments extend the statutory definition of a film, broaden the creative-team criterion for Latvian film status and revise public funding conditions relevant to international co-productions.

The definition of a film will expressly include separate episodes forming an extended narrative. It continues to apply to a completed audiovisual or cinematographic work intended for public release. The explanatory memorandum links the clarification to the development of series and Latvian producers' experience with such projects.

The accompanying memorandum identifies a gap in the earlier terminology: series had become an established form of Latvian audiovisual production, but separate instalments forming a longer narrative were not expressly named. The revised definition recognises those constituent episodes within a completed work intended for public release. It does not, in and of itself, establish a new licensing category for a streaming service or create a new investment levy.

The Latvian film test continues to require production by a Latvian producer registered with the National Film Centre (*Nacionālais kino centrs* – NKC), together with at least one qualifying member of the principal creative team who is a Latvian citizen, a Latvian non-citizen or a holder of a permanent residence permit in Latvia. The professions listed will include additional animation specialisms, visual effects artists, editors, sound directors, costume and make-up designers, and performers in a leading role. These supplement the existing creative roles rather than replacing the producer registration requirement.

The memorandum explains that the previously enumerated creative positions were too narrow for modern co-production teams. It points to work undertaken by Latvian professionals in animation, visual effects, editing and other crafts even where they did not occupy one of the previously listed positions. The amendment thus changes which creative contribution can satisfy the nationality or residence test; it does not dispense with production by an NKC-registered Latvian producer.

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Two of the six criteria in Section 8(1) for public funding of Latvian films are revised. The setting criterion will cover films whose action takes place mainly in Latvia, another Council of Europe member state, or another party to the European Cultural Convention bound by the revised Council of Europe Convention on Cinematographic Co-production. This replaces the reference to Latvia, other EU or EEA states and Switzerland. The language criterion will also be satisfied by Latvian subtitles for a Latvian minority co-production, as an alternative to an original final version in Latvian. The general requirement to satisfy at least three of the six criteria remains. Section 8(2) also retains the alternative route for co-productions provided by international treaties binding on Latvia. Meeting a criterion does not in itself constitute a funding award.

The setting criterion pertains to where the action depicted in a film takes place, rather than requiring all filming or production expenditure to occur there. The memorandum points to wider co-production opportunities beyond the EU and EEA, mentioning countries including Ukraine and the United Kingdom. The revised co-production convention is not newly ratified by this bill: Latvia had already acceded to it in 2018, and the amendments update domestic statutory references accordingly.

A new Section 8(5) specifies that the NKC must allocate public funding, including state aid outside aid schemes, in accordance with state-aid control legislation. Section 10(2)(10) updates the convention reference governing the NKC's existing power to grant co-production status. The memorandum envisages amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 975 on NKC funding, to be submitted by 1 February 2027. The adopted text provides for entry into force on the day following promulgation.

Grozījumi Filmu likumā (1589/Lp14)

https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/saeimalivs14.nsf/0/606CA9DFF4190BE8C2258E9700476309?OpenDocument

Amendments to the Film Law (Bill 1589/Lp14)

Filmu likums

https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=212399

Film Law

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