

[LT] Legal Developments concerning the Public Broadcaster

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As one of the major legal developments of the year 2001, a draft law on a licence fee for the public broadcaster, the Lithuanian Radio and Television ("LRT"), was introduced in the Siemas (Parliament). Like the Bulgarian and Greek laws concerning license fee collection, the draft law suggests the use of electricity meters to enforce the fee.

At present the LRT Law states: "The LRT shall be funded from an allocation of the state budget, and from income obtained from general taxes for LRT's public services for transmission of radio and television broadcasts, advertisements, publications and films, and from sponsorship and revenues obtained from commercial activities. With the increase of LRT revenues derived from general taxes, LRT funding from the state budget shall be reduced accordingly".

However, the present wording "general taxes" was rejected by the Government and it was decided that the notion "license fee" would be introduced instead.

In December 2001, the Siemas decided that in accordance with the draft law the procedure for funding the LRT should come into effect from 1 January 2003 onwards. This timing appears at best to be only a vague possibility because it is unlikely that the law itself will be adopted before the December 2002 Presidential elections.

Other important developments in 2001 concerned the reduction of LRT staff from 1180 on 1 January 2001 to 720 on 1 January 2002 and the closure of the third Lithuanian radio programme. The audience share of Lithuanian public television has risen from 8 percent on 1 January 2001 to 12 percent on 1 January 2002.

Declaration of the Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania of 2 April 2002 concerning the Draft Law Amending the Law on Telecommunications

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