

[LT] Threat to the Independent Mass Media in Lithuania?

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During the last few months, amendments to the Law on Telecommunications are being prepared in Lithuania under the authority of the Ministry of Communications. According to official statements, the changes will liberalise the telecommunications field. The Draft Law would, however, impose additional licence requirements on broadcasters for their use of telecommunications services. These licences would be issued either by the Government itself, or by a state-authorised institution.

Up to now the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public, adopted in 1996 (hereinafter "the 1996 Law", sets out the basic rules for the regulation of the audiovisual sector. It ensures a regulatory system for radio and television broadcasters independent from the executive powers. Under the 1996 Law, the activities of broadcasters are licensed and supervised by an independent body directly accountable to the Parliament, namely the Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania. The 1996 Law was brought into line with EC norms in 2000 and now contains rules for the licensing of radio and television broadcasters and allows the allocation of state resources by way of tender. The 1996 Law also incorporates the EC law requirements for the audiovisual sector, regulating advertising, promoting European audiovisual works, and granting the right of reply. As a result, Chapter 20 of the negotiations with the EU "Culture and Audiovisual Policy" were completed and Lithuania was given access to the EU audiovisual sector support programme MEDIA PLUS, as well as to the culture support programme "Culture 2000".

Bill to amend the Law on Telecommunications of the Republic of Lithuania

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