[RU] How to Prevent Extremism in Mass Media

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The Federal Statute on counteraction of extremist activity was adopted during the spring session of the Federal Assembly and signed by President Vladimir Putin on 25 July 2002. Its passing by the Parliament has attracted much public attention because of the long discussion on the nature and sources of extremism and the role of the mass media in fighting it.

The Statute prohibits mass media outlets from carrying out extremist activities and disseminating extremist materials. Article 1 of the Statute defines such kinds of activity as:

- Exciting racial, national, religious or social hatred connected with violence, or dissemination of calls to violence

- Degrading of national dignity;

- Propaganda regarding exclusiveness, superiority or inferiority of citizens in connection with their attitude to or belonging to a religion, their language or their social, racial or national origin;

- Propaganda and public demonstration of Nazi products and symbols or similar products and symbols which could be mistaken as being of Nazi origin;

- Public calls to carrying out extremist activity or commiting acts prohibited by the Statute (terrorism, creation of unlawful armed organisations, etc).

Regarding the definition of extremist material, the act defines it as documents or information of other form intended for publication that incites extremist activity or justifies its necessity. The listed extremist materials are the works of the leaders of the Nazi party in Germany and the fascist party in Italy, publications justifying national and racial superiority, or the commission of military or other crimes directed to the complete or partial destruction of any ethnic, social, racial, national or religious group.

Article 8 of the Statute sets out the liability of a mass media organisation in a case of distribution of extremist materials or conducting extremist activities. First, a warning on the unacceptability of such actions or such activity shall be issued to the founder and/or the editorial office of the mass media organisation. The public

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institutions and officials authorized to take this measure are: the government body that registered mass media organisation in question (the Ministry for press, broadcasting and mass communication and its territorial branches), or the Prosecutor-General of the Russian Federation, or public prosecutors subordinate to him.

The warning shall specify the exact grounds of its passing, and can be appealed in court. If the warning is not appealed, or deemed illegal by the court, and also if the infringements are repeated within twelve months from the date of issue of the warning or new facts were discovered that prove the carrying out of extremist activity by the mass media organisation, its activities can be terminated.

Article 11 of the Act provides for additional grounds for termination of the activities of a mass media organisation: these are the infringement of human rights or civil freedoms and/or activities that damage the health of citizens or the environment, offend against public order, public security or encroach upon the property or economic interests of natural or legal persons or the State, or create an actual threat of causing such kinds of harm. The appropriate measures shall be carried out by the aforementioned authorised public bodies and officials.

The court can also suspend the distribution of extremist materials in a periodical publication or audio or video recordings of a program, or the production of radio or video programs, in order to prevent further distribution of these materials.

The court's decision can be the basis for the withdrawal of an as yet non-distributed part of the print-off of an extremist production from places of storage, or wholesale or retail trade.

Federal Act on counteraction of extremist activity #114-FZ, 25 June 2002, Rossiyskaya gazeta, 30 July 2002

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