[LV] Amendments to the Radio and TV Law on the Table Again

IRIS 2003-7:1/21

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On 15 May the Saeima (Parliament) of the Republic of Latvia again opened the discussion on the Law on Radio and Television.

The amendments put forward shall change the regulations on the National Broadcasting Council. As the existing law envisages, the National Broadcasting Council oversees both public and private broadcasters. The Council is an autonomous legal entity and operates independently of any Ministry its 9 members are elected directly by the Saeima. Among other things it also manages the state capital shares of the public broadcasters Latvia Television and Latvia Radio.

As to the amendments, the existing Broadcasting Council has to be released from its duties as regards public broadcasters and another council has to be formed the Public Broadcasters' Supervising Council. The authority to be formed will not be autonomous; financing shall come directly from the budgets of Latvian Television and Latvian Radio. As the amendments furthermore envisage, the new Council will consist of 7 members a member of the National Broadcasting Council, a member nominated by the President of the Republic of Latvia, a member nominated by the Cabinet of Ministers and 4 members nominated by at least 20 Members of the Saeima.

As the attempt to solve the problem of conflict of interests of the existing Broadcasting Council, which supervises the public broadcasters and at the same time manages the state capital shares and also regulates the private broadcasters, has been judged positively, the draft has been criticized in that the financing of the authority to be established will be an extra burden upon the already tight budgets of the public broadcasters in Latvia. Besides, there are plans to implement a mechanism to harmonize the decision-making process between the film industry, which is managed by the Ministry of Culture, and the broadcasting sector, which until now has been regulated by the National Broadcasting Council.

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