

[LT] Developments in Audiovisual Legislation

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During summer and autumn 2003, several draft instruments affecting audio-visual legislation have been released.

The draft amendments to the Code of administrative offences allow the imposition of financial sanctions on broadcasters. The application of the Code is regulated by the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public, which states that "for broadcasters who violate the requirements set forth in this Law or who do not comply with the decisions adopted by the Commission, the latter shall impose the following penalties: warnings, fines, in the manner prescribed by the Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Lithuania, suspension of the validity of the licence for a period of up to 3 months, or revocation of the licence". The attempts to introduce the possibility of fines into the existing Code have taken several years as the Code of Administrative offences is to be amended in line with the law on the Provision of Information to the public, which was revised in 2001. The draft includes financial sanctions that the Radio and Television Commission could impose on broadcasters for not complying with its decisions, laws regulating advertising, for not archiving radio and television programs, for broadcasting programs that could harm minors, etc. On 31 July 2003 the government approved the draft proposed by the Ministry of Culture and submitted it to the Seimas, the Parliament, for deliberation as a matter of urgency. The draft was presented to the Parliament on 2 September. The discussions should have been held on 14 September 2003, however the Parliamentary Committee of Law and Legislation decided to launch an open hearing of all parties involved. After this hearing, which was held on 18 September 2003, the Committee is to present the draft to Parliament at the plenary session in the beginning of October.

Although it is an important decision in the field of audio-visual legislation, the aforementioned amendment will be not the sole legislation relevant for the audio-visual sphere to be discussed by the Parliament during this year. In November / December the adoption of a new Law on Electronic Communication is planned which shall replace the Law on Telecommunications and the amendments of the Law on Provision of Information to the Public. The bill was drafted by the Radio and Television Commission in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry had circulated the draft for comments to the institutions concerned with the audio-visual sector and will present it to the Government for its approval.

