[LV] Amendments to the Law on Press and Other Mass Media

IRIS 2006-1:1/32

Ieva Berzina
Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania

On 26 October 2005 the Saeima (Parliament of the Republic of Latvia) adopted amendments to the Act on Press and Other Mass Media.

This Act is one of the first Laws adopted in Latvia after the regain of independence. It was adopted on 20 December 1990 and is still in force as the general Law applicable to all kinds of mass media. This Act is also the only Law regulating the printed media, as the electronic media are governed by the special Radio and Television Law as well.

Initially the amendments were planned to be of a formal nature: to bring the out-of-date wording and terminology of the law in line with the Administrative Procedure Act. However, in the process of reviewing the amendments in Saeima proposals of more substantial nature were introduced and supported. Thus, new articles were introduced stipulating the prohibition of the publishing of child pornography and materials including violence towards children.

The most substantial amendments are related to the issue of revoking of false information and defamation. A new institute of “apology” for defamation is introduced in the law. Previously the law just stipulated that in the case of publishing or broadcasting a false information, the media shall revoke it. Now the amendments say that in “other cases of defamation there are rights to request the apology”. There is no clarification on what information may be classified as defamation or violation of dignity, deserving the apology. From the wording of the law it may be derived that this information does not have to be false: as regarding false information there is a separate regulation - it must be revoked (no apologies needed). The media shall review any request of revoking false information or publish (broadcast) an apology within seven days. If the medium does not agree to the request, the injured person may apply to the court.

It remains to be seen how this article will be interpreted and applied the by mass media and the courts, as previously the regulation applied only to publishing or broadcasting of false information, namely, that everybody is entitled to request to revoke information violating his/her dignity if the distributor of such information does not prove that it is true. The new amendments to the Press and Mass Media Law seem to point in the direction that even true information may be a reason to

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

request apology from the mass media. It can be cast into doubt if this is in conformity with the fundamental freedom of speech, however, the practice of the courts will be the decisive factor.

The amendments came into force on 25 November 2005.

-

Act on Press and Other Mass Media, ZIŅOTĀJS , 16 August 1990, no. 33

-

Amendments to the Act on Press and Other Mass Media of 26 October 2005, Latvijas Vēstnesis , 11 November 2005, no. 181

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026