[LV] Amendments to Electronic Media Law adopted

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On 24 April 2014, the Saeima (the Latvian Parliament) has adopted amendments to the Electronic Media Law.

The amendments clarify the criteria for the status of national electronic mass media, modify the conditions on which a broadcasting permit may be revoked, extend the period for storing the records of broadcasts and provide for other minor changes.

The amendments introduce a rule that an electronic mass medium will be considered as national, if it reaches at least 60% of inhabitants of Latvia or if it reaches the largest portion of the territory of Latvia. Previously only the territorial criterion was included, thus there were difficulties in deciding how to define national status for radio broadcasters. In addition, a special criterion for television remains: in order to be considered national, a channel must reach at least 99% of the territory.

The amendments also modify the conditions on which the National Electronic Media Council (the Council) may revoke a broadcasting permit or a retransmission permit. The conditions in essence remain the same (repeated breach of the law, breach of the conditions of the permit), but are supplemented with the criterion of substantiality, meaning that the breach must be substantial. In order to assess the substantiality, the Council must take into account the danger to the public, the consequences of the breach, the options to prevent a repetition of the breach and the impact of the breach on the general activities of the relevant mass medium.

The amendments extend the period for which the electronic mass media must store the records of their programmes. The law provides that all electronic mass media must fully record their programmes. Previously they had a duty to store these records for one calendar month. Now, the storage period is extended to three months. The amendments also clarify that the Council itself is entitled to perform the recording of programmes, not only to request them from the broadcasters.

The amendments came into force on 28 May 2014.

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Likums ”Grozījumi Elektronisko plašsaziņas līdzekļu likumā”, "Latvijas Vēstnesis", 92 (5152), 14.05.2014

http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266156

Amendments to the Electronic Media Law, "Latvijas Vēstnesis", 92 (5152), 14 May 2014

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