[GR] Amendments to Act on public broadcaster

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Two amendments to Act 4173/2013 directly affecting the status of the Greek public broadcaster NERIT, which was recently established after the shutdown of the former public broadcaster ERT (see IRIS 2013-6/24), were passed by parliament on 8 August 2014.

The first amendment concerns the formation of the Supervisory Council, the body that had been instituted to ensure independence from government and political parties, and having the essential task of promoting sound corporate governance in NERIT (see IRIS 2013-9/20).

According to the new provisions, the selection procedure begins with a call for tender issued by the President and CEO of NERIT. The list of candidates is then forwarded to the competent minister who suggests the names of seven members. The final decision is taken by a simple majority of a parliamentary body named the "President's Conference" (Διάσκεψη των Προέδρων), which consists of the chairman and vice-presidents of the parliament, the chairmen of its standing committees and the chairmen of the political parties.

The second amendment concerns the nomination of the CEO and the board members of NERIT, who are selected among candidates that have responded to a call issued by the President of the Supervisory Council (two months before the expiration of the term of the existing President and CEO). The members are appointed by the Supervisory Council upon suggestion of a three-member body consisting of members of ASEP – the independent authority dealing with the recruitment of public servants (Ανώτατο Συμβούλιο Επιλογής Προσωπικού), ESR - the independent authority regulating radio and television stations (Εθνικό Συμβούλιο Ραδιοτηλεόρασης), and the Legal Council of the State, a service that provides legal support to the central government.

During discussions in parliament, opposition parties raised questions about the new text and the independence of public broadcasting, insofar as the government traditionally controls the parliamentary "President's Conference". Under the former text, both members of the Supervisory Council and those of the Board of NERIT were selected by a special selection committee comprised of private or public companies, or organisations with international experience in executive-staff selection.

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On 12 September 2014, the Chairman of NERIT, Prof. Antonis Makridimitris, and Deputy CEO Rodolfos Moronis, suddenly resigned a few months after the President and CEO, George Prokopakis, was removed from his position (see IRIS 2014-7/24). To date, no official statement has been made on the Chairman's resignation, or on whether the amendments to the Act played any role in the resignation.

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