[NL] Parliament agrees on amendments to Media Act

IRIS 2017-1:1/27

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On 25 October 2016, the Dutch Senate agreed on the final package of amendments of the Mediawet (Media Act). After some debate between the State Secretary of Education, Culture and Science, the House of Representatives and the Senate, the new Media Act can now enter into force.

After previous attempts to amend the Media Act 2008 (see for an earlier proposal IRIS 2013-4:1/22), the Senate passed the latest version of the bill on 15 March 2016 (IRIS 2016-5:1/25). However, the Senate still was not entirely satisfied with the proposed amendments. It requested, as a precondition for passing the bill, that the State Secretary submit an additional bill that would address the concerns of the Senate. Although this procedure received some criticism, State Secretary Sander Dekker started working on the additional bill.

The main concerns of the Senate concerned the political influence on the appointment of members of the Board of Directors and the Supervisory Board of the NPO (the National Public Broadcasting agency). The proposed amendment prescribed that the Minister of Education, Culture and Science would be in charge of these appointments. Under the new Media Act, these Boards would play a more important role than before, mainly in supervising the budget of the broadcasting organisations. The Senate feared that the political influence on the appointment of the board members would endanger the journalistic independence of the NPO, which is codified in Article 2 of the Media Act.

State Secretary Dekker sought to address these concerns. In the additional bill, Article 2.5 prescribes that for the appointment of new board members, the Supervisory Board will install an independent advisory committee. This committee advises the Minister on the selection of new candidates. The Minister has to follow the advice, unless there are important grounds to ignore it. In this way, the additional bill accentuates the self-regulatory character of the NPO and therefore guarantees its independency.

Wet van 26 oktober 2016 tot wijziging van de Mediawet 2008 in verband met aanvullingen bij het toekomstbestendig maken van de landelijke publieke mediadiens

https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stb-2016-388.html?zoekcriteria=%3fzkt%3dUitgebreid%26pst%3dStaatsblad%26dpr%3dAlle

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Act of 26 October 2016 to amend the Media Act 2008 in connection the future-proofing of the national public media service

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