[LT] Ban on Russian TV channels considered

IRIS 2017-9:1/26

Ingo Beckendorf
Institute of European Media Law (EMR), Saarbrücken/Brussels

Members of the Lietuvos radijo ir televizijos komisija (Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission - LRTK) have met to discuss a possible ban on the two Russian television channels Rossija RTR (previously RTR Planeta) and TVCi. In a statement, the LRTK said that programmes broadcast by the two channels had violated the Law on Public Information of the Republic of Lithuania and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (2007/65/EC). Since it is registered in Sweden, Rossija RTR is also subject to the administrative control and jurisdiction of an EU member state and must therefore uphold the country of origin principle and meet restrictions on the freedom to retransmit television programmes. The broadcaster TVCi, on the other hand, is subject to the regulations and jurisdiction of Russia, a state party to the Council of Europe's Convention on Transfrontier Television, which also includes the country of origin principle.

Rossija RTR is a Russian state-owned television broadcaster that is transmitted abroad via cable and satellite — in Germany, it is carried on pay-TV by cable network operators such as Vodafone Kabel Deutschland and Unitymedia — while TVCi is the international version of the Russian TV channel TV Tsentr. The Moscow-based channel is one of the country's largest, transmitting in 77 Russian regions. Although its main focus is life in Moscow, TVCi also shows films and series.

In April 2014, Rossija RTR was banned for three months in Lithuania and Latvia. According to the Latvian broadcasting authority, the ban was imposed because the TV channel had backed military action against a sovereign state during the war in Ukraine. Lithuania's foreign minister, Linas Antanas Linkevičius, said that Rossija RTR had breached journalistic standards and incited viewers to war and hatred. It had broadcast calls from Russian politician Vladimir Zhirinovsky to send Russian tanks to Ukraine and Brussels, for example. Zhirinovsky founded and chairs the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), an extreme far-right Russian nationalist party. Lithuania also banned the channel for three months in April 2015 and December 2016; in both cases, the European Commission decided that the measures taken by Lithuania were in conformity with EU law because Lithuania had demonstrated that Rossija RTR had infringed the ban on incitement to hatred. The broadcaster had tried to provoke tension and violence between Ukrainians and Russians, as well as against the European Union and NATO member states, in particular Turkey.

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

The LRTK was set up by the Lithuanian Parliament to regulate the broadcasting sector. Its activities are governed by the constitution and based in particular on the 2000 Information Act, an updated version of the 1996 Media Act. It has joint responsibility, along with the Rysiu Reguliavimo Tarnyra (regulatory body for communication - RRT), for frequency allocation and the protection of minors.

Lithuanian print media, on the other hand, regulates itself, primarily through the monitoring of and compliance with a code of ethics drawn up by the Lithuanian Journalists' Union and various other interest groups.

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026