# [LT] Lithuania suspends Russian TV channel RTR Planeta for one year

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At a meeting on 14 February 2018, Lithuania's Radio and Television Commission (LRTK) decided to suspend the reception of Russian television channel RTR Planeta for one year. In a press release, the media watchdog said that the decision had been taken due to frequent legal violations by the broadcaster. In the broadcasting regulator's opinion, RTR Planeta had breached the EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) and the Lithuanian Law on the Provision of Information to the Public three times in 2017. It had incited viewers to hatred among nations and instigated war in its programmes "Duel. Vladimir Solovjov Programme", "Evening with Vladimir Solovjov" and "60 Minutes".

The LRTK contacted the broadcaster, the institution in Sweden that had registered the channel and the European Commission about the matter. However, it did not receive a reply from RTR Planeta, and the Swedish Broadcasting Commission has no powers to ensure that such infringements are not repeated. As a result, the LRTK has now ordered its domestic television and Internet providers to suspend the broadcast of RTR Planeta for one year from 23 February.

RTR Planeta is a Russian state television channel transmitted abroad via cable and satellite (in Europe via "Hot Bird 6"). In Germany, it is part of the pay-TV services of cable network operators Vodafone Kabel Deutschland and Unity Media.

Lithuania and Latvia had previously suspended the channel for three months in April 2014. The Latvian broadcasting authority had based its decision on the fact that RTR Planeta had justified military action against a sovereign state during the war in Ukraine. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania also stated that the channel had breached journalistic quality standards and incited to war and hatred. For example, it had broadcast Vladimir Zhirinovsky's calls for Russian tanks to be sent to Ukraine and Brussels. Lithuania also banned transmission of the channel for three months in April 2015 and December 2016. On both occasions, the European Commission decided that the suspensions were in conformity with EU law, since Lithuania had demonstrated that RTR Planeta had violated the ban on incitement to hatred. It held that the channel had tried to provoke tension and violence between Ukrainians and Russians, as well as towards EU and NATO member states, especially Turkey.

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Lithuania has also repeatedly suspended a number of other Russian television channels in the past. Its media authority has consistently based its decisions on biased reporting by the broadcasters concerned and the associated political influence thereby exerted. Although they undoubtedly restrict the freedom of expression, supporters of such decisions in politics and the media say that they have become an inevitable response to the propaganda that is being spread with increasing levels of aggression by Russian state broadcasters.

### *LRTK press release*

http://www.rtk.lt/en/free-reception-of-the-television-channel-rtr-planeta-temporarily-suspended/

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