[LV] Restrictions on harmful or illegal content and Russian propaganda channels

IRIS 2022-5:1/23

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As already reported, at the beginning of 2022 (Iris 2022-2/10), the National Electronic Mass Media Council of Latvia (NEPLP) banned the distribution of nine Russian television programmes in Latvia which, in NEPLP's view, disseminated content and appeals that endangered national security. Since then, Latvia has continued to restrict content endangering national security. Media monitoring by NEPLP has resulted in new bans, as well as legislative changes.

Since 24 February 2022 - the beginning of the war started by Russia in Ukraine - NEPLP has prohibited the retransmission into Latvia of many Russian-related television programmes, relying not only on national law, but also on Article 3 of the AVMSD. The latest decision, adopted on 7 March 2022, prohibits the retransmission of 18 television programmes owned by the Russian bank *Gazprombank's* media holding company *Gazprom Media Holdings* or its subsidiary *Red Media*. Among the banned programmes are *THT Comedy*, *THT4 International*, *TNT*, *TNT Music* and others.

In addition, NEPLP has restricted access to 71 websites available in Latvia. The decision, adopted on 15 March 2022, denies access to the domain names or Internet protocol addresses of these websites, as the content of those websites, according to the assessment of security institutions and NEPLP, poses a threat to national security. Namely, NEPLP observed the systematic dissemination of aggressive war propaganda and incitement to national hatred. The websites also spread misinformation about events in the world, including the war in Ukraine. The decision was based not on the media laws, but on recent amendments to the Electronic Communications Law that are directed to electronic communications merchants. Amendments to the Electronic Communications Law adopted by the *Saeima* (Parliament) on 10 March 2022 grant NEPLP the right to restrict access to Internet sites where content that endangers national security is placed. A person whose rights or legal interests are restricted as a result of the decision has the right to challenge the relevant decision before the administrative court.

Furthermore, the Saeima has amended the Protected Service Law to assign administrative liability to the end-user for the use of illegal systems to watch television, including restricted programmes. Natural persons may be fined up to EUR 700. The aim of the amendments is to bring awareness that the installation or use of illegal systems to avoid broadcasters' copyright or restrictions on

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harmful content for private purposes is illegal.

NEPLP turpina ierobežot Krievijas propagandas kanālu izplatību Latvijā.

https://www.neplpadome.lv/lv/sakums/padome/padomes-sedes/sedes-sadalas/neplp-turpina-ierobezot-krievijas-propagandas-kanalu-izplatibu-latvija.html

NEPLP continues to restrict the spread of Russian propaganda channels in Latvia

NEPLP saistībā ar apdraudējumu valsts drošībai ierobežo 71 tīmekļvietni Latvijā.

https://www.neplpadome.lv/lv/sakums/padome/padomes-sedes/sedes-sadalas/neplp-saistiba-ar-apdraudejumu-valsts-drosibai-ierobezo-71-timeklvietni-latvija.html

Press release: the NEPLP restricts 71 website in Latvia due to endangerement to public security

NEPLP aizliedz 18 Krievijas televīzijas programmu izplatīšanu.

https://www.neplpadome.lv/lv/sakums/padome/padomes-sedes/sedes-sadalas/neplp-aizliedz-18-krievijas-televizijas-programmu-izplatisanu.html

Press release: the NEPLP prohibits the distribution of 18 Russian television channels

Nacionālās elektronisko plašsaziņas līdzekļu padomes lēmums Nr. 128/1-2 „Par televīzijas programmu "NTV Serial" ("НТВ Сериал"), "NTV Stilj" ("НТВ Стиль") un "NTV Pravo" ("НТВ Право") izplatīšanas aizliegšanu Latvijas Republikas teritorijā“.

https://likumi.lv/ta/id/330746-par-televizijas-programmu-ntv-serial-ntv-stilj-un-ntv-pravo

The 10 March 2022 decision of the National Electronic Mass Media Council of Latvia No. 128/1-2

Grozījumi Elektronisko sakaru likumā

https://likumi.lv/ta/id/330742-grozijumi-elektronisko-sakaru-likuma

Amendments to the Electronic Communications Law

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Nacionālās elektronisko plašsaziņas līdzekļu padomes lēmums Nr. 136/1-2 "Par piekļuves liegšanu tīmekļa vietnēm"

https://likumi.lv/ta/id/330850-par-piekluves-liegsanu-timekla-vietnem

The 15 March 2022 decision of the National Electronic Mass Media Council of Latvia No. 136/1-2

Grozījums Aizsargāta pakalpojuma likumā

https://likumi.lv/ta/id/330740-grozijums-aizsargata-pakalpojuma-likuma

Amendments to the Protected Service Law

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