[BY] New restrictions for news from non-controlled media

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Amendments to the basic media law of Belarus introduce the notion of the “news aggregator”, with specific qualifying requirements as to its nature (minimum 50 news items published within five days, above 50 percent of the news items are taken from other parties, whereas online media, official websites of public bodies and online shops are excluded). News aggregators and their owners now fall under the existing provisions related to other mass media, including on transparency, the right of reply, restrictions on foreign property, content restrictions and bans, privileges, as well as the current registration and closure (blocking) procedures, including blocking for the dissemination of news originating from media already banned in Belarus (or hyperlinks to such media).

The statute specifically bans online dissemination of broadcast programmes that are not registered as media outlets in Belarus.

In its new Article 51-3, the Mass Media Statute now provides the possibility of imposing a ban on the activities of foreign media and journalists on the territory of the Republic of Belarus in the event their state of origin displays “unfriendly actions” towards the Belarusian media.

Amendments to the Statute of the Republic of Belarus “On the Mass Media” were signed into law on 6 July 2023, officially published on 7 July. They enter into force on 7 October 2023.

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