[GE] PARLIAMENT REVIEWS STRICTER RULES ON BROADCASTING AND FOREIGN AGENTS

IRIS 2025-3:1/7

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On 18 March, the Georgian Parliament adopted, in the second reading, a law on the registration of foreign agents, which, according to the Georgian authorities, would be a literal translation into Georgian of the US FARA (Foreign Agents Registration Act). The new law will complement the Law of Georgia "On transparency of foreign influence", which entered into force in 2024 (for more information on the Law of Georgia "On transparency of foreign influence", see: IRIS 2023-4:1/30, IRIS 2024-5:1/16, and IRIS 2024-6:1/13).

While the 2024 law operates with the notion of an “organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power”, the 2025 law uses the new term “agent of a foreign principal”. Unlike the former, the latter encompasses both legal entities and individuals. The draft law does not apply to news broadcasters, press outlets or associations that operate under Georgian jurisdiction (established and registered in Georgia) or to media outlets that seek or receive advertising, have subscribers or receive other types of income, if at least 80% of their owners, managers and leadership are citizens of Georgia.

The authorities argued that the aim of the draft law is the ineffectiveness of the law "On transparency of foreign influence", which they called a light version of FARA, and the wish to include individuals, and not just organisations, under the scope of foreign agents.

On the same day, new amendments to the 2004 Law on broadcasting were also adopted in the first reading. Some of them ban broadcasters from receiving direct or indirect funding from foreign entities with the exception of commercials (but not social advertising), teleshopping, sponsorship, or product placement. Foreign entities are also forbidden from funding the preparation or airing of the broadcasts in Georgia.

Another set of amendments amends Article 52 of the Law on broadcasting (“Due accuracy and the right of reply”), including requirements to take “all reasonable measures” to avoid spreading false or misleading information, to cite sources for all statistical data, and to identify sources of factual information, or clearly state that they are anonymous.

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Additional rules are also provided on the fairness and impartiality of broadcasters and further on the protection of private life. For more information on past amendments to the Law on Broadcasting, see: IRIS 2005-7:1/24, IRIS 2011-10:1/22, IRIS 2013-8:1/23, and IRIS 2023-6:1/28.

უცხოური აგენტების რეგისტრაციის აქტი

https://info.parliament.ge/file/1/BillReviewContent/381087

Draft Law of Georgia on registration of foreign agents

https://info.parliament.ge/file/1/BillReviewContent/381087

Law of Georgia "On transparency of foreign influence", No 07-3/433/10, entered into force 3 June 2024

https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/6171895?publication=0

Law of Georgia on broadcasting

https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/32866?publication=70

‘მაუწყებლობის შესახებ“ საქართველოს კანონში ცვლილების შეტანის თაობაზე

Law of Georgia On Amendments to the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting

https://info.parliament.ge/file/1/BillReviewContent/381095

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