

## [EE] Parliament amends the Public Broadcasting Act to require an expert majority on the Council of the Estonian public service broadcaster

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On 17 June 2026, the Estonian Parliament (*Riigikogu*) adopted amendments to the Estonian Public Broadcasting Act (*Eesti Rahvusringhäälingu seadus*) reshaping the composition of the Council of the Estonian public service broadcaster (*Eesti Rahvusringhääling* - ERR) by 60 votes to 25. President Alar Karis promulgated the law on 2 July 2026, while publicly cautioning that although the amendments do not contradict the Constitution, they could affect press freedom adversely if political parties appoint council members who defend party rather than public interests.

The ERR Council is the broadcaster's highest governing body. Under the previous composition, it comprised one representative of each parliamentary group, together with four recognised experts in the field. While the amendment originated as a bill (819 SE) submitted by the Social Democratic Party and individual members, with the stated purpose of ensuring that both genders be represented on the Council, during committee proceedings, the Parliament's Culture Committee added provisions directed at the Council's political independence, among them the rule that the number of expert members must exceed the number of group representatives by one. In the current six-group composition, this requires three additional expert members. An open competition for the new expert seats is to be launched on 17 August 2026, with the Parliament expected to decide on the appointments in the autumn.

The passage was contested on procedural grounds. The Isamaa group asked the President not to promulgate the law, arguing that a substantive amendment introduced immediately before the second reading — regarding the enlargement of the Council — should have led to an interruption of the reading under parliamentary procedure. The President promulgated the law nevertheless, coupling the decision with the cautionary note regarding press-freedom mentioned above and emphasising that given the ERR's role in Estonian society, it is essential to strengthen the independence of the Council and public trust in the broadcaster.

The amended rules concerning the Council's composition will govern the appointments made through the August competition and subsequent parliamentary decisions. The expert-majority and gender-representation

requirements will apply from the law's entry into force.

***Act amending the Estonian Public Broadcasting Act, Bill 819 SE***

*Gesetz zur Änderung des estnischen Rundfunkgesetzes, Gesetzentwurf 819 SE*

