

24 June 2024

To

Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania,

Ms Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen, Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania,

Members of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, via Ms Vaida Servetkienė, Director of Document Department, Acting Secretary General of the Seimas,

Members of the Committee on Culture of the Seimas, via Ms Agnė Jonaitienė, Head of the Committee Bureau,

Members of the Committee on Budget and Finance of the Seimas, via Committee Bureau,

Mr Mindaugas Lingė, Chair of the Committee on Budget and Finance,

Ms Ieva Ulčickaitė, Chief Advisor to the President,

Mr Frederikas Jansonas, Chief Advisor to the to the President on Communications,

Subject: Draft amendment to Lithuanian law on national radio and television threatens public broadcaster's funding model

The International and European Federation of journalists (IFJ-EFJ), together with the International Press Institute (IPI) are concerned about the draft amendment to the Lithuanian Law on National Radio and Television (LRT) submitted by Mindaugas Lingė, Member of Parliament, on 14 June 2024. The draft seriously threatens the public broadcaster's funding model.

The current LRT law guarantees that its budget should never fall below its 2019 level. The proposed amendment seeks to abandon this crucial provision and replace it with a [mechanism](#) that would limit the growth of LRT's budget.

The draft was submitted without prior consultation with the public broadcaster. As stated in Article 5(3) of the newly adopted European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), funding procedures should be based on "transparent and objective criteria laid down in advance". The submission of such changes without informing and consulting the public broadcaster reinforces our concerns about the future of the broadcaster.

The proposed abolition of the minimum funding threshold undermines the long term sustainability of LRT, compromising its independence and reducing its ability to fulfil its mandate.

The amendment is being justified as necessary in order to redirect funds to increase Lithuania's defence spending. Raising a defence budget must not come at the cost of

undermining institutions essential for the preservation of Lithuania's democracy, including public broadcasting.

As a public media service, LRT must be adequately funded to fulfil its mission, to evolve in line with rapid technological and social change and to ensure adequate preparedness for uninterrupted broadcasting in times of emergency. Moreover, the public service media's role in combatting disinformation is also vital for the protection against information warfare.

We urge the authorities to engage in open consultation and discussion with LRT to ensure that any changes to the funding model will maintain guarantees that LRT is fully funded and able to fulfil its public service remit.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We remain at your disposal for any further information or assistance.

Ricardo Gutiérrez, General Secretary of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)
Anthony Bellanger, General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)
Scott Griffen, Interim Executive Director, International Press Institute (IPI)