

Brussels, 18 October 2018



Mr. Jouzas Neverauskas
Chairman of LRT Workers Trade Union
By email

Independence of Public Service Media in Lithuania

Dear Chairman Neverauskas,
Dear Juozas,

I thank you for your letter and for sharing the concerns of workers and the trade union of Lithuanian Radio & Television regarding the proposed changes to the law on LRT, which would alter its governance and threaten its independence.

The majority of Seimas seeks to amend the Law on LRT to reduce the power and the scope of the LRT Council. Further, it seeks to shorten the terms of office of its members and change the procedure of appointment. The proposed legislative change would imply that the nomination of the LRT Council would coincide with the term of Parliament.

The global community of broadcasting unions affiliated to UNI Global Union is concerned that the proposed changes to the governance structure, the process of nomination and the term of office undermine the editorial and political independence of LRT and its financial sustainability.

We strongly believe that nominations to governance positions in LRT shall not be used to exert political influence over LRT. Further, we stress that the governance structure and governing environment need to guarantee the independence and accountability of the public broadcaster.

We call on the Lithuanian authorities to refrain from legislative action, which would harm freedom of speech, the independence of the media and the fulfilment of the public service mission of the LRT.

We urge Parliament to involve all stakeholders including the LRT management and trade union in any review of the governance structure of the LRT. We propose draw from best practice in the European Union that guaranty independence, accountability and sustainability of public service media and promote access of citizen to a quality public media service. The separation of supervision and direction of LRT is key for the democratic nature of public service media in Lithuania.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Studinger'.

Johannes Studinger
Head of UNI – Media, Entertainment & Arts