

2023 Rule of Law Report

Media freedom questions:

1. The 2022 Rule of Law Report contained a recommendation to Cyprus to 'strengthen the rules and mechanisms to enhance the independent governance of public service media taking into account European standards on public service media'. What concrete initiatives have been prepared in this regard? Can you kindly provide us with more details and an updated timeline with regard to plans to amend the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation Law?

Based on the relevant legislation (CyBC Law Chapter 500A), the Cyprus Radio Television Authority issues an annual quality report on CyBC, based on which it is determined whether the public broadcaster has fulfilled its remit successfully. Moreover the Auditor General annually audits the financial accounts of PSM and issues recommendations to ensure their accountability, independence and efficiency. There is no state interference in the management or the programs of PSM and their independence is already safeguarded by law.

The Ministry of Interior has forwarded suggestions to the Permanent Secretary of Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation, with a letter dated 19/12/2022, requesting that matters of appointment and dismissal of members of CyBC's Board to be included in the upcoming amendment of the relevant Law (CyBC Law Chapter 300A). We also gave the example of the formalization of the selection and appointment procedures of the Cyprus ombudsperson as a good practice and pointed that European standards on public service media should be taken into account. It is noted that the upcoming amending legislation will also include matters of supervision by the regulatory authority (CRTA), similarly with the private television and radio organizations and renumbering of articles for better understanding as it is a quite outdated piece of legislation that needs modernisation. We have just been informed by CyBC that the legal consultant of CyBC who is currently working on the amending legislation, has our suggestions before him, and his draft is expected to be submitted to CyBC by end of April. We are thus expecting it to be submitted to the Ministry of Interior right after that, early May at least in order to finalize the text. This will be done in consultation with the CRTA and the Law Commissioner. It will then be submitted to the Republic's Law Office for legal checking, then to the Council of Ministers for approval and finally to the House of Parliament for voting.

2. Can you kindly provide us with more details and an updated timeline with regard to plans to amend the Press Law?

The Press and Information Office outsourced the drafting of the new legislation to an independent legal consultant who prepared a new draft and submitted it to the Ministry of Interior in mid-March 2023. The Ministry of Interior is currently in the final steps of finalising the text (by mid April 2023) before sending it to the relevant parties (such as Journalists Union, Association of Editors of Newspapers and Magazines etc) for a final consultation (with two weeks deadline) and then it will be submitted to the Law Office for legal vetting. We expect this to take 1-2 months before finally submitting it to the Council of Ministers for approval and then the House of Parliament for voting.

3. Can you kindly provide us with more details and an updated timeline with regard to plans to amend the Radio and TV Organizations Law?

There is no plan from the government's part to amend the Radio and television organizations law, after the last amendment in December 2021 which formed as the transposition of the AVMSD. There was however a proposal of legislation suggested by a Member of the House of Parliament in 2022, regarding an amendment of this law, that was put under discussion last October but did not proceed to voting. The legislation aimed to make the ownership models of television and radio organizations more flexible, similarly with other European media systems, and at the same time strengthening the need for informing the public of media ownership including beneficial owners. We were told that further discussion on the matter was expected in 2023 and as we are aware the House of Parliament is currently examining some amendments to it and will table it again. No specific timeline is in place.