



Venice, 7 March 2026

CDL-AD(2026)001

Or. Engl.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
(VENICE COMMISSION)

LITHUANIA

OPINION

**ON DRAFT AND ADOPTED AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW ON THE
LITHUANIAN NATIONAL RADIO AND TELEVISION**

**Adopted by the Venice Commission
at its 146th Plenary Session
(Venice, 6-7 March 2026)**

On the basis of comments by

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I. Introduction

1. By letter of 3 December 2025, Ms Monika Garbačiauskaitė-Budrienė, Director General of the Lithuanian National Radio and Television (LRT), requested an urgent opinion from the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe on two sets of amendments to the Law on the Lithuanian National Radio and Television (hereinafter, "the Law on the LRT"): Draft Law No. XVP-1052 on the dismissal of the Director General of the LRT and Law No. XV-618 on the reduction of the LRT's funding. According to the request letter, these legislative developments, combined with growing political and institutional pressure on the LRT, raise serious concerns about their compatibility with the Lithuanian Constitution and European standards on the independence and funding of public service media. On 11 December 2025, the Director General submitted an additional request to the Venice Commission to analyse the new Draft Law No. XVP-1119, providing for a fundamental revision of the rules governing the early dismissal of the Director General of the LRT, within the same urgent Opinion. The request letter indicated that, taken together, the three amendments aggravate the systemic risks to the independence of the national public broadcaster ([CDL-REF\(2025\)053](#)).

2. At its 145th Plenary Session (12-13 December 2025), the Venice Commission authorised the preparation of the Opinion through the urgent procedure, pursuant to Article 14a of the Commission's Revised Rules of Procedure and in line with its established practice of accepting opinion requests from national independent institutions on legislation concerning them.¹

3. Mr Christoph Grabenwarter, Mr David A. Kaye, Ms Adele Matheson Mestad and Ms Tanja Kerševan acted as rapporteurs for this opinion.

4. On 19 and 20 January 2026, a delegation of the Commission, composed of Mr David A. Kaye, Ms Adele Matheson Mestad and Ms Tanja Kerševan, accompanied by Ms Delphine Freymann, and Mr Mamuka Longurashvili from the Secretariat, travelled to Vilnius and had meetings with the representatives of the parliamentary majority and opposition, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Director General, Administration and the Council of the LRT, advisors to the President and to the Prime Minister, the Supreme Court, the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics, as well as representatives of the civil society, media organisations and the international community. The Commission is grateful to the Lithuanian authorities for their excellent support in organising the meetings. Several written comments were submitted after the meetings. The Commission is grateful to the interlocutors for their input.

5. Following the visit, it was decided to revert to the ordinary procedure of adoption of the opinion in view of the developments.

6. This opinion was prepared in reliance on the English translation of the amendments and accompanying documents provided in [CDL-REF\(2025\)053](#). The translation may not accurately reflect the original version on all points.

7. This opinion was drafted on the basis of comments by the rapporteurs and the results of the meetings held on 19-20 January 2026 in Vilnius. The draft opinion was examined at the joint meeting of the Sub-Commissions on Democratic Institutions and on Fundamental Rights on 5 March 2026. Following an exchange of views with Mr Artūras Zuokas, Member of the Seimas (Parliament of Lithuania) and Ms Monika Garbačiauskaitė-Budrienė, Director General of the LRT, it was adopted by the Venice Commission at its 146th Plenary Session (Venice, 6-7 March 2026). At this session, the Venice Commission also authorised the preparation of the Opinion on the revised draft law, requested by the Director General of the LRT on 3 March 2026, through the urgent procedure, pursuant to Article 14a of the Commission's Revised Rules of Procedure.

¹ For example, judicial councils, supreme courts, Ombudsman institutions, the Advisory Group tasked with assessing the integrity and professional suitability of candidates for the Constitutional Court of Ukraine.

II. Background

A. Lithuanian Radio and Television (LRT)

8. According to a well-known definition, "Public service media (PSM) refers to broadcasting that is made, funded, and controlled by the public to serve the public interest. Whether through TV, radio, or digital platforms, its content aims to inform, educate, and entertain all audiences".² The Lithuanian public broadcaster, the Lithuanian Radio and Television (LRT), has nearly a century of history. In 1926, the first radio station began regular broadcasts, followed by the television service broadcasting in 1957. The LRT currently broadcasts on three TV channels and three radio stations³ and employs approximately 700 people. The LRT news website is available in Lithuanian, Russian, English and Polish.⁴ The state budget appropriations allocated to the LRT for 2025 amounted to €79.6 million, reflecting a consistent upward trend over recent years: from €46.3 million in 2020 to €53.79 million in 2021, €55.43 million in 2022, €63.44 million in 2023, and €72.9 million in 2024.⁵

9. In 2023, the LRT was awarded the Journalism Trust Initiative (JTI) Certificate and was recertified in 2025.⁶ Recent data indicate a high level of public confidence in the LRT. According to 2024 surveys, 73% of Lithuanians trust the LRT, 87% consider its work professional, and 68% of respondents assess the LRT's activities positively.⁷ These indicators were further corroborated during the country visit, where most interlocutors, including representatives of the authorities, emphasised the LRT's professional performance and its central role in the Lithuanian media landscape. Taken together, these findings indicate that the LRT enjoys strong public credibility and is widely perceived as a reliable and professional source of information. During the meetings, the representatives of the LRT and media associations stressed that, in the current geopolitical context, the LRT plays an important role in countering foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI).

B. LRT's constitutional status and domestic legal framework

10. Although the Lithuanian Constitution does not expressly define the constitutional status of the LRT as a public broadcaster, the Lithuanian Constitutional Court, in a consistent line of rulings, has recognised the LRT as an institution of constitutional significance and affirmed the State's constitutional obligation to ensure public access to information through mass media by establishing a public broadcaster capable of fulfilling this role and providing adequate material, organisational, and financial resources, as well as legal safeguards ensuring the broadcaster's independence from interference by state authorities, officials, or other actors. Such independence encompasses both editorial independence, allowing the broadcaster to freely determine the content and structure of its programmes, and institutional independence, entailing autonomous organisational arrangements managed by bodies free from external influence, including that of political authorities or parties. The Constitutional Court has also underlined that these two dimensions are intrinsically linked, as shortcomings in institutional independence may ultimately undermine editorial freedom and, thereby, the broadcaster's ability to fulfil its constitutional function.⁸

² <https://www.ebu.ch/about/public-service-media>. See also Article 2(3) of Regulation (EU) [2024/1083](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market and amending Directive 2010/13/EU (European Media Freedom Act): "3. 'public service media provider' means a media service provider which is entrusted with a public service remit under national law and receives national public funding for the fulfilment of such a remit".

³ <https://apie.lrt.lt/en/about-lrt/the-most-reliable-media>

⁴ <https://apie.lrt.lt/lrt/ziniasklaidos-grupe>

⁵ <https://apie.lrt.lt/skaidrumas/finansai/lrt-biudzetas>

⁶ <https://journalismtrustinitiative.org/>

⁷ <https://apie.lrt.lt/en/about-lrt/the-most-reliable-media>

⁸ Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania, [Ruling](#) of 21 December 2006 (on LRT's independent management); [Ruling](#) of 16 May 2019 (on the LRT's constitutional status and relationship with Parliament and other State authorities); [Ruling](#) of 3 November 2020 (on the LRT's financing as an independent constitutional institution).

11. The activities of the LRT are regulated by the Law on the LRT ("the Law")⁹ and the Statute (regulations) of the LRT, as well as other related legal acts. According to Articles 2 and 3 of the Law, the LRT is an independent public establishment, with the State as its sole owner. The Council and the Director General are the governing bodies of the LRT. The Council is the highest collegial governing body of the LRT, exercising both managerial and supervisory functions and consisting of twelve members appointed for a six-year term: four by the President, four by the Seimas (two from the majority, two from the opposition), and four by the Research Council of Lithuania, the Lithuanian Education Council, the Lithuanian Association of Artists and the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference, respectively. The Council adopts the procedures for organising open competitions for the positions of the LRT Director General, the LRT Ethics Controller and Head of the LRT Internal Audit Service and publishes them on the LRT website. The Council appoints and dismisses the Director General. The resolutions of the Council are adopted by simple majority, except for the dismissal of the Director General, the Ethics Inspector and the Head of the Internal Audit Service, which requires a two-thirds majority (Articles 13(5), 15(5) and 17(5) of the Law on the LRT). If the votes are evenly divided, the chair of the Council meeting shall have the casting vote.

12. The Director General of the LRT is appointed by an open vote by simple majority of the Council members for a five-year term following a public competition. If the simple majority is not obtained, a new competition shall be held (Article 13, para. 2 of the Law on the LRT). The Director General is responsible for managing the LRT, implementing the Council's resolutions, and representing the LRT domestically and internationally. The Director General submits an annual activity report to the Council for approval (Articles 13-14 of the Law on the LRT). The powers of the Director General of the LRT shall cease upon expiry of the term, resignation, death, loss of Lithuanian citizenship, or dismissal following a vote of no confidence based on the public interest and requiring a qualified majority of two-thirds of all Council members. In 2018, Ms Monika Garbačiauskaitė-Budrienė was appointed Director General of the LRT for a five-year term following a public competition. In 2023, she was re-elected for a second term after two failed attempts, due to a deadlock, as Ms Garbačiauskaitė-Budrienė and another candidate each received six votes.¹⁰

13. The Law on the LRT sets out eligibility criteria for Council members and the Director General that are substantially similar, including Lithuanian citizenship, higher education (a master's degree or equivalent), an impeccable reputation, and relevant experience (five years' work experience for Council members, managerial experience for the Director General). The "impeccable reputation" requirement under Article 4 of the Law on Civil Service excludes persons convicted of certain criminal offences or dismissed for gross misconduct.

14. Under Article 19 of the Law, the LRT shall be financed from state budget appropriations, income from the sale of programmes, sponsorship announcements, publishing, as well as from support and income from commercial and economic activities. Funds allocated to the LRT in the state budget shall be indicated under a separate budget line. Funds allocated from the state budget for the broadcasting of the LRT programmes and the operation of the LRT website shall be indicated in a separate programme.

C. Audits of the LRT

15. In October 2025, the National Audit Office published its report on an audit of the LRT's activities for the period 2021-2024.¹¹ The audit identified shortcomings in human resources management, procurement practices, internal controls, and programme accessibility and diversity. The audit recommended strengthening internal governance, strategic oversight by the LRT Council, and

⁹ <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.1559303036A8/UvSZVuHBAM>

¹⁰ <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2090638/lrt-council-to-make-3rd-attempt-to-select-director-general>

¹¹ <https://www.valstybeskontrolė.lt/EN/Post/18575/national-audit-office-lrt-audit-identified-systemic-risks-to-employee-social-gua>

clearer performance indicators. It did not call for changes to the LRT's editorial independence, governance, or funding model.

16. Before the financial audit, the internal audit on political neutrality, commissioned by the LRT Council, was completed in April 2025. The internal audit report has not been published. During the visit to Vilnius, several interlocutors expressed concern to the delegation that the legislative changes and successive audits were part of an attempt to remove the LRT's Director General.

D. Amendments to the Law on the LRT

17. Based on the explanatory materials and the exchanges held in Vilnius, as well as other publicly available sources, the legislative developments concerning the amendments to the Law on the LRT can be summarised as follows.

1. Law No. XV-618¹²

18. Article 19, para. 5 of the Law on the LRT sets out the method for calculating state budget appropriations. The version in force before 3 December 2025 (when the amendment by Law No. XV-618 entered into force) provided that "the amounts allocated to the LRT from the state budget each year shall constitute 1 per cent of the actually received state budget and municipal budget revenues from personal income tax and 1.3 per cent of excise revenue in the previous year. The amount of appropriations allocated to the LRT shall not be less than the state budget appropriations allocated to the LRT in 2019".

19. The initial version of the draft amendments to para. 5 of Article 19 was introduced on 18 June 2024 by a member of the 2020-2024 Seimas' Committee on Budget from the ruling coalition. Registered under No. XIVP-3943, the draft law proposed the following adjustment to the existing formula: "5. The amount of funds allocated to the LRT from the state budget each year constitutes 1 per cent of the actually received state budget and municipal budget revenues from personal income tax and 1.3 per cent from excise revenue in the previous year. The amount of appropriations allocated to LRT, compared to previous years, may not increase at a faster rate than the country's gross domestic product at current prices increased in the previous year".

20. According to the explanatory memorandum of the initial draft amendments, in response to the ongoing military aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and its implications for Lithuania's national security, the authorities had submitted to the Seimas a Defence Fund package to increase defence spending to 3% of GDP for 2025-2030, with a substantial share of additional resources expected to come from higher excise duties. Given that the LRT funding is partly indexed to excise revenues, the projected sharp increase in excise receipts could lead to disproportionate growth in the LRT appropriations, potentially exceeding its actual needs, particularly in light of the already significant annual increases in recent years (allocations to the LRT from the state budget were growing every year; the LRT funding in 2024 increased by almost 9.5 million euros or almost 15% compared to 2023). Against this background and invoking considerations of budgetary balance and solidarity in an unfavourable geopolitical context, the drafters proposed linking the annual growth of the LRT allocations to GDP growth, thereby moderating future increases while ensuring that the LRT remains adequately funded and contributes, alongside other state-funded institutions, to the overall effort to strengthen national defence. Finally, the explanatory memorandum noted that, based on the GDP change indicated in the March 2024 economic development scenario, the LRT appropriations from the state budget would be as follows: EUR 76.6 million in 2025 (forecast under the current legal framework – EUR 79.6 million), EUR 80.7 million in 2026 (forecast under the current legal regulation – EUR 85.3 million) and EUR 84.9 million in 2027 (forecast under the current legal regulation – EUR 91.4 million).

¹² Detailed information on the legislative process is available [here](#).

21. On 11 July 2024, the draft law was approved at first reading, followed by several modification proposals between August 2024 and November 2025, and the election of the new Seimas in the meantime (October 2024).

22. On 12 November 2025, some members of the new ruling coalition parties, Nemunas Dawn and the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union, submitted proposals that fundamentally revised Draft Law No. XIVP-3943, reducing the applicable percentages (from 1 to 0.75 per cent of state and municipal budget revenues from personal income tax, and from 1.3 to 0.8 per cent of excise duty revenue actually received in the previous year) and introducing a three-year freeze on state budget appropriations at the 2025 level for 2026-2028. The draft law was not accompanied by an updated explanatory memorandum, but it included a reference to the current geopolitical situation and the results of the state audit of the LRT activities (see para. 15 above). On 19 November 2025, the Committee on Budget approved the proposals and incorporated them into Draft Law No. XIVP-3943. The revised draft law was adopted on 27 November 2025 as Law No. XV-618 and entered into force shortly thereafter, on 3 December 2025. On 5 January 2026, a group of opposition parliamentarians challenged Law No. XV-618 before the Constitutional Court of Lithuania.

2. Draft Laws Nos XVP-1052 and XVP-1119¹³

23. Under Article 13, Paragraph 5 of the Law on the LRT, "The Director General of LRT may be dismissed from office before the end of his term of office on grounds of no confidence only if the Council bases its no confidence on the public interest and if at least two-thirds of all Council members vote in favour of such no confidence".

24. On 24 November 2025, some members of the ruling coalition parties, Nemunas Dawn and the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union, introduced Draft Law No. XVP-1052 to amend Article 13(5) of the Law on the LRT as follows: "5. The Director General of the LRT may be dismissed from office before the expiry of his or her term of office on the grounds of loss of confidence, by secret ballot, if not less than one half of all members of the Council vote in favour of such loss of confidence".

25. On 26 November 2025, the Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists issued an alert on Risks to the LRT's Independence from Governance Amendments and Budget Freeze.¹⁴ On the same day, Lithuanian journalists, media representatives, organisations representing journalists, and citizens began collecting electronic signatures for a petition calling on members of the Seimas to ensure media freedom and the public broadcaster's freedom, and not to vote for the draft law. By 5 March 2026, the petition had reached 145,262 signatures.¹⁵ The proposed amendments prompted significant public reaction, including large-scale demonstrations in support of the LRT that drew tens of thousands of participants – according to some interlocutors, one of the largest protests in Lithuania since the 1990s.

26. Draft Law No. XVP-1119, registered on 10 December 2025, to amend paragraphs 2 and 5 of Article 13 of the Law on the LRT, reads as follows: "2. The Director General of LRT shall be appointed to and dismissed from office by the Council for a period of 5 years through a public competition, by secret ballot. If the required number of votes is not obtained, a new competition shall be held. Only a citizen of the Republic of Lithuania of impeccable reputation, holding higher university education or equivalent education, possessing a master's degree or an equivalent higher education qualification, and having 5 years of managerial work experience may be appointed Director General. A person shall not be considered to have an impeccable reputation if they do not meet the requirements of impeccable reputation for heads of institutions or

¹³ Detailed information on the legislative process is available [here](#).

¹⁴ <https://fom.coe.int/en/alerte/detail/107643286>

¹⁵ <https://peticijos.lt/P-87725>

candidates for heads of institutions, as established in the Law on Civil Service. 5. The Director General of LRT may be dismissed from office before the expiry of his/her term of office due to a lack of confidence only if he/she improperly performs the functions of the LRT Director General established in Article 14 of this Law, or if the Council does not approve the annual LRT activity report, and provided that more than half of all Council members vote in favour of such lack of confidence". The entry into force of Draft Law No. XVP-1119 was set for 1 January 2026.

27. Following intense parliamentary debate on 16-17 December 2025, during which the opposition organised the first filibuster¹⁶ in the country's history, registering 500 alternative proposals to Draft Law No. XVP-1119,¹⁷ consideration of Draft Law No. XVP-1119 was postponed. On 22 December 2025, the Seimas' Speaker indicated that it might have been preferable not to apply the urgent procedure and to follow the ordinary procedure, thereby allowing for broader discussion of the draft law.¹⁸ During the meeting with the delegation, the Seimas' Vice-Speaker reiterated the position and noted that there is no need for an urgent procedure.

28. On 30 December 2025, the Seimas Board established a working group tasked to review the legal regulation of the LRT governance and, by 14 February 2026, to submit proposals to the Seimas Board on improving the legal regulation of the governance of LRT and to prepare the necessary draft legal acts.¹⁹ The working group comprises 17 members - 12 MPs (seven from the governing coalition and five from opposition factions) and five media representatives (not including a representative of the LRT). Some media associations and NGOs declined to participate due to the group's composition and working methods. The opposition deplored the lack of clarity regarding the working group's mandate. A number of interlocutors considered that the working group may serve more as a procedural step to address public concern than as a substantive forum for improving the LRT's governance and that the aim is to maintain the December Draft Law No. XVP-1119. The Delegation was further informed that once the Seimas' working group produces a draft amendment to the LRT Law, the Office of the Prime Minister of Lithuania may organise further consultations to review and improve the legislative framework relating to the media. On 5 February 2026, the opposition Liberal Party withdrew from the working group, expressing concern that the group serves only as a procedural step to adopt the urgent amendments to the Law on LRT examined in December 2025.²⁰ On 13 February 2026, the working group's deadline was extended until 24 February 2026.²¹ On 19 February 2026, the opposition Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats also withdrew from the working group, stating that, in their view, the group's proposed decisions risk weakening freedom of expression and democratic principles. The working group concluded its work on 24 February 2026, and the new draft law on the LRT that it had prepared was formally registered in the Seimas the following day, on 25 February 2026. This draft law was conveyed to the Venice Commission by the Lithuanian authorities on 26 February 2026. On 3 March 2026, the Director General of the LRT submitted a request for an urgent opinion on the new draft law on the LRT prepared by the working group.

III. International standards

29. International standards impose two main categories of obligations on states regarding public service media. Regarding substantive safeguards for governance and editorial independence, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has established that "a situation whereby a powerful economic or political group in society is permitted to obtain a position of dominance

¹⁶ <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/pasaulyje/6/2779323/lrt-trumpai-seime-pirmasis-filibusteris-lietuvos-istorijoje-kas-tai>

¹⁷ https://www.lrs.lt/pls/inter/dokpaieska.rezult_l?p_nr=XVP-1119*&p_nuo=&p_iki=&p_org=&p_drus=&p_kalb_id=1&p_title=&p_text=&p_pub=&p_met=&p_lnr=&p_denr=&p_es=0&p_tid=&p_tkid=&p_t=0&p_tr1=2&p_tr2=2&p_gal=&p_rus=

¹⁸ <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2783235/lithuanian-president-says-seimas-will-slow-down-adoption-of-contested-lrt-law-changes>

¹⁹ <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/c04e69a0e56411f08918e1adc7c5b1ec>

²⁰ https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=35403&p_k=1&p_t=293866

²¹ <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/0475c49008d11f1b465ab875bcad79f>

over the audiovisual media, and thereby exercise pressure on broadcasters and eventually curtail their editorial freedom, undermines the fundamental role of freedom of expression in a democratic society. In such a sensitive sector as the audiovisual media, in addition to its negative duty of non-interference, the State has a positive obligation to put in place an appropriate legislative and administrative framework to guarantee effective pluralism. This is especially relevant when the national audiovisual system is characterised by a duopoly" (i.e., the existence of both public and private broadcasters).²² Genuine, effective exercise of freedom of expression requires not merely state non-interference but also positive measures of protection, with the state acting as "ultimate guarantor of pluralism".²³ Where a state creates a public broadcasting system, domestic law and practice must ensure pluralistic service delivery, public access to impartial and accurate information, and conditions that enable journalists and media professionals to impart information and comment without obstruction.²⁴

30. Committee of Ministers Recommendation R(96)10 on the Guarantee of the independence of public service broadcasting²⁵ established foundational principles requiring that public service media legal frameworks guarantee independence from political and economic interference, that appointments to management or supervisory bodies avoid placing those bodies at risk of political interference, and that possibilities for early removal or suspension be very limited and governed by clear rules. Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)1 on Public service media governance²⁶ stipulates that appointments cannot be used to exert political or other influence over public service media operations. Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)1 on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership recognises the crucial role of independent public service media in fostering pluralism and emphasises that adequate conditions should be guaranteed for them to continue to play this role in the multimedia landscape.²⁷ Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)11 on principles for media and communication governance further underlines that the promotion of media pluralism and the sustainability of quality journalism involve the institutionalisation of independent and adequately funded public service media.²⁸ Resolution 2179 (2017) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on Political influence over independent media and journalists²⁹ recommended that appointment procedures be merit-based, politically neutral, and not used to influence editorial policy.

31. Concerning financial safeguards, several Committee of Ministers recommendations emphasise the necessity of stable and sufficient funding for public service media in order to guarantee their editorial and institutional independence, their capacity to innovate, high standards of professional integrity and to enable them to properly fulfil their remit and deliver quality journalism.³⁰ In particular, CM/Rec(2012)1 indicates that it is "imperative" that "the public service media is consulted over the level of funding required to meet their mission and purposes, and their views are taken into account when setting the level of funding".³¹ Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)1 states that states should "ensure stable, sustainable, transparent and adequate funding for public service media on a multiyear basis in order to guarantee their independence from governmental, political and market pressures and enable them to provide a broad range of

²² ECtHR, NIT S.R.L. v. the Republic of Moldova, [GC], no. [28470/12](#), judgment of 5 April 2022, para. 186.

²³ ECtHR, Manole and Others v. the Republic of Moldova no. [13936/02](#), judgment of 17 December 2009, para. 63.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, paras. 100-101.

²⁵ CM Recommendation [No. R \(96\) 10](#) on the guarantees of the independence of public Service broadcasting, 11 September 1996.

²⁶ [CM/Rec\(2012\)1](#) - Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on public service media governance, 15 February 2012.

²⁷ [CM/Rec\(2018\)1](#) - Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership, 7 March 2018.

²⁸ [CM/Rec\(2022\)11](#) - Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on principles for media and communication governance, 6 April 2022.

²⁹ <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=23989&lang=en>

³⁰ [CM/Rec\(2012\)1](#), *op. cit.*, [CM/Rec\(2022\)4](#) - Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on promoting a favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age, 17 March 2022.

³¹ [CM/Rec\(2012\)1](#), *op. cit.*, para 26.

pluralistic information and diverse content. ... States are moreover urged to address, in line with their positive obligation to guarantee media pluralism, any situations of systemic underfunding of public service media which jeopardise such pluralism".³² PACE resolutions stress the need for predictable, sufficiently stable funding arrangements that enable effective planning and shield public service media from annual budgetary pressures susceptible to political change, with resource levels preferably determined by an independent body with limited scope for political interference. The Committee of Ministers' Declaration on the guarantee of the independence of public service broadcasting in the member states³³ called on member states to provide the financial and other means necessary to ensure genuine editorial independence and institutional autonomy, removing any risk of political or economic interference. These standards are complemented by the work of Council of Europe expert bodies, which emphasise the need for predictable, sufficiently stable funding arrangements that enable effective planning and shield public service media from annual budgetary pressures that could be affected by political changes.³⁴

32. At the European Union level, the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA),³⁵ directly applicable in all member States since August 2025, gives binding legal force to these longstanding Council of Europe standards. The EMFA requires the EU member States to ensure editorial and functional independence of public service media providers through transparent, non-discriminatory appointment procedures with criteria laid down in advance; dismissal protections including prior justification, notification, and judicial review; and funding arrangements that are adequate, sustainable, predictable, and based on objective criteria – guaranteeing resources sufficient to fulfil the public service remit while safeguarding editorial independence.³⁶

33. The Venice Commission's Updated Rule of Law Checklist³⁷ requires that legislative procedures be efficient, transparent, inclusive, and democratic; that urgent procedures be confined to exceptional circumstances with major reforms clearly excluded; and that laws not be changed frequently or suddenly without apparent reason. The Checklist emphasises the constitutional significance of guaranteeing media pluralism and editorial independence.

³² [CM/Rec\(2018\)1](#) - Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership, 7 March 2018, para. 2.10.

³³ <https://rm.coe.int/16805d7431>

³⁴ [Report on Good practices for sustainable news media financing](#), Committee of experts on increasing resilience of media (MSI-RES), 2024, page 58. An example of how the structure of budgetary processes is assessed in contexts where independence is essential can be found in the [Belgrade Principles on the Relationship between NHRIs and Parliaments](#), which underscore that parliaments should provide NHRIs with adequate resources to carry out their mandates effectively. They recommend that NHRIs be able to submit strategic plans or programmes of activities for parliamentary consideration during budget discussions, helping ensure that funding supports their core functions (Part I, "Parliament's Role"). While the Principles do not prescribe detailed budget procedures, they stress that resource allocation should support institutional independence and allow NHRIs to operate without undue interference. These considerations – including transparent and sufficiently resourced budgets and the ability to plan activities – are essential to maintaining credibility and operational effectiveness and are consistent with the Paris Principles on NHRIs.

³⁵ See Regulation (EU) [2024/1083](#), European Media Freedom Act, *op. cit.*

³⁶ In its [Resolution on the attempted takeover of Lithuania's public broadcaster and the threat to democracy in Lithuania](#) adopted on 22 January 2026, the European Parliament recognised the essential role of independent public service media in upholding democracy, media freedom, and countering disinformation. It strongly condemned efforts to undermine the independence of the LRT, particularly through recent legislative amendments that reduce funding, weaken safeguards against political interference, and lower protections for the early dismissal of LRT's Director General. The Parliament noted that these actions are seen as politically motivated and a violation of EU law, including the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA). The Parliament also urged Lithuania's government to reject these changes, ensure transparent consultations with civil society, and respect EU standards for media independence. It called for the European Commission to monitor developments and take appropriate actions, including infringement procedures, to safeguard media freedom and democratic principles in Lithuania.

³⁷ [CDL-AD\(2025\)002](#), the Updated Rule of Law Checklist, Benchmark II.A.6 on "Law-making procedures", para. 34.iv, Benchmark II.B.2 on "Stability and consistency of law", para. 51, and Benchmark II.D on "Checks and balances", paras 84-87.

IV. Analysis

A. Legislative process

34. The Commission recalls that legislative amendments must comply with the principles of good law-making. As with any piece of legislation, a formal act of Parliament needs to meet certain qualitative benchmarks. In this context, the Commission refers to principles II.A.6 ("Law-making procedures") and II.B.2 ("Stability and consistency of law") of its Updated Rule of Law Checklist (see para. 33 above).³⁸ The Checklist further requires broad public consultations on legislation of particular constitutional or societal importance, targeted consultations with affected stakeholders, and impact assessments where appropriate. In this specific case, the (draft) legislation affecting the LRT, given its constitutional status, falls within the category of reforms "of particular constitutional or societal importance" that require enhanced procedural safeguards.

35. The Venice Commission notes that, overall, the developments concerning the LRT occurred in a tense political context (see paras 18-28 above). In such circumstances, the importance of a proper, transparent, and inclusive procedure for adopting new legislation is further heightened.

36. Article 162(3) of the Statute of the Seimas provides that the urgent procedure for adopting draft laws may be applied only in exceptional cases where an immediate need exists to safeguard important public or national interests or to protect constitutional values.³⁹

37. As explained in para. 22 above, the proposed fundamental modifications to the LRT's funding model were submitted two weeks before adoption, without a revised explanatory memorandum (beyond a reference to the current geopolitical situation and the results of the state audit of the LRT activities) or an impact assessment. The delegation was informed that the LRT itself had not been consulted on the funding amendments and had no opportunity to provide an assessment of their potential impact. The LRT has indicated that these reductions would require it to scale back certain programming priorities.

38. The Commission notes that the explanatory memorandum to the initial draft amendments to Article 19(5) provided the justification for the defence budget increase in the context of a sensitive geopolitical situation (see para. 20 above). At the same time, the change to the LRT's funding formula was aligned with the new mechanism linked to GDP growth, ensuring lower but stable growth in the LRT funding in the coming years. Furthermore, this formula was based on different parameters and forecasts under the legal regulations applicable at that time. Against this background, the new proposal XV-618 changed the percentage of income tax and excise revenues. Additionally, and importantly, it introduced a three-year freeze of the LRT budget. The Venice Commission notes that the explanatory memorandum does not address the new formula and that, in the absence of a revised memorandum, the rationale for these changes and their potential impact cannot be understood.

39. In its anti-corruption assessment of draft laws No. XVP-1052 and No. XVP-1119 published on 18 December 2025,⁴⁰ the Special Investigation Service of Lithuania (SIS)⁴¹ raised serious concerns about the legislative process, questioning its transparency, the adequacy of public involvement, and the appropriateness of applying the urgent procedure. The SIS found that the draft law bypassed Government and institutional review and was fast-tracked despite the expedited

³⁸ [CDL-AD\(2025\)002](#), *op. cit.*

³⁹ [Statute of the Seimas](#)

⁴⁰ [CDL-REF\(2025\)053](#), page 13.

⁴¹ The Special Investigations Service is a main anti-corruption law enforcement agency of the Republic of Lithuania accountable to the President of the Republic and the Seimas (Article 2 of the [Law](#) on Special Investigation Service). The SIS carries out the anti-corruption assessment of the draft legislation, which are expected to regulate public relations particularly prone to corruption (Article 8 of the [Law](#) on Corruption Prevention).

procedure being reserved for exceptional circumstances. The SIS also observed a procedural irregularity: although the required signatures were collected to request an independent expert impact assessment, the Seimas prioritised voting on the urgent procedure while failing to put the impact assessment request to a vote, contrary to the order of precedence prescribed in the Seimas Statute.

40. A number of interlocutors from media associations, civil society, and the opposition stated that the legislative process did not comply with the general principles of democracy, public participation, expert assessment, and procedural standards. The rush to consider the amendments to the Law eliminated the conditions necessary for genuine discussion and deprived key stakeholders and experts of the opportunity to participate.

41. The Venice Commission recalls that legal certainty is a fundamental principle of law, guaranteeing citizens the foreseeability and stability of legal rules. In the Venice Commission's view, adopting the amendments on funding within two weeks of their submission and using the urgent procedure regarding the draft law XVP-1119 give cause for concern.

42. The Venice Commission has always been wary of the use of urgent procedures for legislative proposals introduced by individual MPs rather than the Government, as such bills are not subject to the ordinary quality control and impact assessment and may bypass consultation procedures.⁴² For the same reasons, the Commission has on many occasions warned against the use of urgent procedures for legislation of significant importance for society.⁴³

43. Taking into account the above circumstances, the Venice Commission considers that the speed and manner in which the amendments were examined and adopted are not consistent with European good practices in good law-making. In particular, the amendments concerning the funding of the LRT raise serious concerns about their compliance with European standards, as outlined in greater detail below. As regards the amendments concerning the procedure for dismissing the Director General, the Venice Commission delegation was informed that the urgent procedure initially applied had been suspended and that Draft Law No. XVP-1119 remains pending before the Seimas. The Commission notes that a working group was established to consider amendments to the Law. The working group completed its work on 24 February 2026, and the new draft law it prepared was registered in the Seimas on 25 February 2026 (see para. 28 above). The Commission expresses the hope that the ordinary parliamentary procedure will be followed through a consultative and inclusive process, in full compliance with the principles of good law-making.

44. As the process moves forward, the Commission emphasises the importance of thorough analysis, impact assessment, and consultations with national stakeholders for the continuation of the legislative process.

B. Funding of the LRT

45. The Venice Commission notes that the LRT's budget had increased in 2025 compared with 2024 (see paras 8 and 20 above), partly due to tax-related adjustments. Although it was widely acknowledged during the discussions that the LRT operates with a comparatively high budget, the broadcaster explained that these resources were necessary to adapt to technological developments and evolving operational requirements.

⁴² Venice Commission, [CDL-AD\(2019\)015](#), Parameters on the Relationship between the Parliamentary Majority and the Opposition in a Democracy: a checklist, para. 75.

⁴³ See Venice Commission, [CDL-AD\(2019\)014](#), Romania – Opinion on Emergency Ordinances GEO No. 7 and GEO No. 12 Amending the Laws of Justice, paras 9-21; [CDL-AD\(2018\)021](#), Romania - Opinion on draft amendments to the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code, para. 39.

46. Pursuant to Law No. XV-618, the LRT's budget has been frozen at the 2025 level for the period 2026-2028, implying no adjustment for inflation or rising operational costs. In an inflationary environment, such a freeze constitutes a *de facto* real-terms reduction in the LRT's resources, which, according to the LRT management, risks compromising the broadcaster's capacity to maintain programming quality, retain qualified staff, and invest in technological infrastructure necessary for effective public service provision. The LRT also noted that the permanent reduction in the funding formula from 2029, decreasing personal income tax allocation from 1% to 0.75% and excise revenue allocation from 1.3% to 0.8%, represents a substantial structural diminution of the LRT's funding base.

47. Law No. XV-618 was adopted and entered into force just before the start of the budgetary year (2026), meaning that the 2026 budget had already been prepared. According to the LRT, these amendments amounted to a structural, long-term reduction in funding without evidence of any exceptional fiscal necessity or economic crisis that could justify altering the existing financing model in this way, while no such justification was convincingly presented in the parliamentary debate.

48. The Venice Commission notes that Article 5.3 of the EMFA requires Lithuania, as a EU Member State, to ensure that funding procedures for public service media "are based on transparent and objective criteria set out in advance", and that those procedures shall guarantee adequate, sustainable and predictable financial resources that correspond to the fulfilment of and the capacity to develop within its public service remit. "Those financial resources shall be such that the editorial independence of public service media providers is safeguarded".

49. Across Europe, public service media are predominantly financed through public sources, using one or a combination of the following models: licence fee as a universal household-based contribution, income- or tax-based levy earmarked for public service media, state budget funding, provided directly from the general state budget.⁴⁴ Mixed systems, such as in Lithuania, are common, combining a primary public source with other public sources and/or income from advertising or other commercial sources.

50. According to the comparative analysis made by the European Audiovisual Observatory,⁴⁵ across Europe, there is significant variation in the duration and predictability of public service media funding. In several States, funding is determined mainly on an annual basis through the general budgetary process, even where licence fees exist (e.g., Italy, Spain, Croatia). In others, legislation provides for multi-annual frameworks or formula-based mechanisms that set funding over several years (e.g., Germany, Finland, Sweden). A third group combines annual budget decisions with structural parameters, such as indexed licence fees or multi-year reference frameworks or contracts, which provide a certain degree of continuity across budget cycles (e.g., France, the United Kingdom). Different approaches also exist to assess funding adequacy. Some countries rely on multi-year assessments supporting medium-term planning (e.g., Austria, Germany), while others approve public service media budgets annually through parliamentary procedures, either through simple annual approval (e.g., Cyprus, Romania) or combined with longer-term funding parameters or political commitments set in advance (e.g., Norway, Denmark).

51. Under Council of Europe standards, stable, sustainable, transparent and adequate funding for public service media on a multiyear basis is recommended to guarantee their independence from external pressure (see para. 31 above). In its Preamble (Recital 31), the EMFA also expresses a preference for multi-year funding decisions to reduce the risk of undue influence linked to annual budget negotiations, while recognising Member States' competence over funding and the constitutional principle of annual budgets. To address risks associated with annual funding

⁴⁴ European Broadcasting Union, [Report on Funding of Public Service Media](#), 9 February 2026.

⁴⁵ European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe), [Report on Governance and funding of public service media](#), 22 July 2025.

cycles, some systems also provide for *ex ante* adequacy assessments or allow public service media providers to establish reserve funds to buffer against financial fluctuations or funding cuts (e.g., Spain, Croatia, Hungary, Romania).

52. Recent comparative data (EBU 2026)⁴⁶ indicate that, despite the significant increase in public service media funding in Lithuania in recent years, funding levels remain below the European average. In 2024, total public service media funding in Lithuania amounted to approximately 0.09% of GDP, well below the EBU average of 0.14%, and *per capita* funding remained low, at around EUR 2.05 per month per citizen, positioning Lithuania in the lower tier of European public service media funding. This shows that recent funding growth is an improvement in absolute terms, but it has not been sufficient to close the gap with better-funded public service media systems in Europe.

53. The Commission recalls that in a favourable environment for freedom of expression, public service media "should be able to carry out their remit in an effective, transparent and accountable manner. A prerequisite for them to be able to do so is that they themselves enjoy independence that is guaranteed by law and borne out in practice" and that therefore, funding arrangements for public service media must not be used to exert pressure on editorial content or institutional autonomy.⁴⁷ Measures that undermine a public broadcaster's financial sustainability may therefore raise issues under Article 10 of the ECHR, which imposes positive obligations on States to create conditions conducive to media pluralism and independent public service broadcasting. When a State has established a public service broadcasting system, it has voluntarily assumed positive obligations under Article 10 to protect its independence and ensure adequate conditions for its functioning. The ECtHR has held that the State must establish a legislative framework to guarantee genuine pluralism, editorial independence, and protection from political and economic pressure.⁴⁸ The Commission therefore considers that measures that undermine these safeguards – whether through funding or governance – may constitute a failure to fulfil these positive obligations.

54. The Venice Commission stresses that it is not its role to examine the funding formula or to determine whether any specific budget allocation is adequate for a public service broadcaster's operations. Rather, the Commission assesses whether the process by which funding decisions are made complies with the State's positive obligations under Article 10 ECHR to guarantee genuine pluralism, editorial independence, and protection from political and economic pressures. EMFA Article 5(3) explicitly requires member States to ensure adequate, sustainable, and predictable funding for public service media, which can only be achieved if such funding is ensured through proper decision-making processes. Accordingly, where the national authorities consider it necessary to revise public service media funding – whether as part of overall public sector budget cuts, or to respond to fiscal pressures – such adjustments must be carried out through a process that allows a proper assessment of their impact (in particular on the ability to fulfil its public service mandate in the digital era), include meaningful consultation with the broadcaster (see para. 31 above) (including regarding the elaboration of the formula) and provides sufficient time for the institution to adapt its budgetary planning and programming accordingly.

55. The Commission considers that, in the present case, neither of the above conditions was met. The authorities introduced fundamental changes to the funding formula through Law No. XV-618 – including a three-year nominal freeze and permanent reductions in revenue allocations – without conducting an impact assessment, without ensuring meaningful consultations, and without providing a transitional period to ensure predictability. These

⁴⁶ European Broadcasting Union, Report on Funding of Public Service Media, 9 February 2026, Op. Cit. See also European Broadcasting Union (2026). Public service media atlas: A visual benchmarking guide (Media Intelligence Service).

⁴⁷ See CM/Rec(2018)1, *op. cit.*, para. 1.5. See also CM/Rec(2012)1, *op. cit.*, para. 26.

⁴⁸ Manole and Others, *op. cit.*, paras 99-100.

amendments were introduced two weeks before adoption and took immediate effect at the start of the budgetary year, by which time the LRT had already prepared its 2026 budget under the previously applicable framework. The brevity of the legislative process and the absence of meaningful engagement with the LRT deprived the broadcaster of any opportunity to adapt its planning, creating a foreseeable risk that it will lack the resources necessary to fulfil its public service remit. These funding constraints cannot be assessed in isolation from the proposed governance amendments examined below, as financial pressure and weakened dismissal safeguards may, in combination, increase the vulnerability of the LRT to political influence.

56. In Lithuania's challenging security environment, characterised by persistent foreign information manipulation and hybrid threats as reported by most interlocutors, the LRT plays a key role in countering disinformation. Therefore, the Commission considers that care should be taken to ensure that the LRT remains adequately funded and contributes, alongside other state-funded institutions, to the overall effort to strengthen national defence (see para. 20 above).

57. Against this backdrop, the Venice Commission recommends conducting a comprehensive assessment of the LRT's funding model, including an analysis of the impact of the recent changes on the LRT's ability to fulfil its public service remit effectively. This assessment should be carried out in close consultation with the LRT, primarily, as well as other stakeholders concerned, with a view to reviewing paragraph 5 of Article 19 of the Law on the LRT on the basis of the results of this assessment.

C. Procedure for Dismissal of the Director General

58. The Venice Commission notes the change in the voting threshold for dismissing the Director General from "not less than one half" (Draft Law No. XVP-1052) to "more than half" (Draft Law No. XVP-1119). The LRT Council comprises 12 members. Under Draft Law No. XVP-1052, dismissal of the Director General could be carried by six votes out of twelve, meaning a tie would be resolved by the casting vote of the Council's Chairman. Draft Law XVP-1119 raises the requirement to more than half, i.e., a minimum of seven votes, thus moving from a mere half-threshold that allows dismissal without an actual majority, to a genuine simple majority. Draft Law No. XVP-1119 – previously considered under the urgent procedure, debated by the Seimas, postponed (and the urgent procedure discontinued) and currently under review by the working group – proposes several changes to the procedure for appointing and dismissing the Director General of the LRT. These include: (a) lowering the voting threshold for dismissal from a two-third majority to simple majority of all Council members; (b) secret voting for appointment and dismissal of the Director General, (c) new grounds for dismissal, and (d) applying the amended rules to the current Director General.

1. Voting threshold

59. The Commission notes that the explanatory memoranda accompanying Draft Laws No. XVP-1052 and No. XVP-1119 regarding the grounds and the procedure for early dismissal of the Director General of the LRT argue that the current two-third majority requirement is "very high" and may, in practice, render dismissal "impossible" even in cases of "genuine lack of confidence" or "serious problems within the organisation", whereas a simple majority of more than half of all Council members would ensure "a balance between stability and accountability" and allow decisions to be taken "more efficiently". The Seimas Legal Department directly challenged this justification, observing that higher quorum requirements are typically established precisely to ensure stability, protect institutional leadership from political volatility, and safeguard independence. The Legal Department further noted that dismissal – unlike appointment – constitutes a restriction on the right to work, for which a higher quorum is usually considered justified, and therefore questioned whether the proposed reduction is justified and necessary. In the absence of examples in the explanatory memoranda of Council deadlock or cases where misconduct could not be addressed under the existing framework, the Seimas

Legal Department, having reviewed the draft, questioned whether the proposed reduction is "justified and necessary".⁴⁹

60. The Venice Commission has previously addressed issues concerning qualified majorities and anti-deadlock mechanisms in relation to the election by parliament of judges/presidents of Constitutional or Supreme Courts, members of Judicial Councils, Prosecutors General, members of Prosecutorial Councils, members of independent, non-political bodies, as well as Ombudspersons. The Commission stressed that a qualified majority is intended to ensure broad agreement and compromise. For this reason, a qualified majority is normally required in the most sensitive areas, notably in the elections of office holders, as it is aimed at ensuring that the ruling majority of the day cannot control the appointments and thus shields the office holder from the influence of the political majority.⁵⁰

61. Under Council of Europe standards, the shortening of management appointments should only occur under very limited, defined circumstances and should never be used to exert political or other influence over the operation of public service media.⁵¹ The EMFA reinforces this position in Recital 28 of its Preamble, identifying interference by the government in the dismissal of public service media management as a factor that "negatively affects the access to independent and impartial media services, thereby affecting the right to freedom of expression as enshrined in Article 11 of the Charter".⁵² Article 5(2) of the EMFA accordingly provides that decisions on dismissal before the end of a term of office may be taken "only exceptionally" where the persons concerned no longer fulfil conditions laid down in advance, must be duly justified, and must be subject to judicial review.⁵³ Insufficient safeguards in this regard risk exposing public service media providers to political interference in their editorial line and governance.⁵⁴ In this context, quorum requirements and voting modalities play an important (though often underestimated) role. The Commission also recalls that dismissal before the expiry of a fixed term constitutes a more serious interference with institutional independence than appointment and therefore requires correspondingly stronger substantive and procedural safeguards.

62. The limited overview of national legislation of Council of Europe member States prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of publicly available sources⁵⁵ shows that different majority thresholds are applied for the early dismissal of public broadcasters' directors general. A simple or absolute majority is required in, *inter alia*, Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, France, Georgia, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Some systems require qualified majorities, such as two thirds (e.g., Austria, Belgium (Wallonia), the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, Spain), three-fifths (60%) for the dismissal of the Director General of ZDF in Germany, or three-fourths for the appointment and dismissal of the Director General of BHRT in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Higher-than-simple majority thresholds are generally understood as a mechanism to limit the influence of short-term

⁴⁹ [CDL-REF\(2025\)053](#), page 10.

⁵⁰ Venice Commission, [CDL-PI\(2025\)023](#), Updated compilation of Venice Commission opinions and reports relating to qualified majorities and anti-deadlock mechanisms in relation to the election by parliament of constitutional and supreme court judges/presidents, prosecutors general, members of judicial and prosecutorial councils, independent/non-political bodies and ombudspersons, paras 6-7.

⁵¹ Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)1, *op. cit.*, Appendix, Articles 14-15; see also European Audiovisual Observatory, Governance and Independence of Public Service Media, IRIS Plus 2022, p. 28 (commenting that appointments to the highest ranks "should only be shortened under very limited, defined circumstances and should never be 'used to exert political or other influence over the operation of the public service media'"). See further Recommendation No. R(96)10 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the guarantee of the independence of public service broadcasting, adopted 11 September 1996, Appendix, Sections I-II.

⁵² EMFA, *op. cit.*, Recital 28.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Article 5(2).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Recital 28 ("Where safeguards do not exist or are insufficient, there are risks of political interference in the editorial line or governance of public service media").

⁵⁵ See European Audiovisual Observatory: Governance and independence of public service media – [2022](#) and [2025](#) publications. See also the tracking [table](#) on public service media governance and funding, as well as the [Media Legislation Database](#) of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA).

political majorities and to encourage broader consensus. However, the effectiveness of such requirements is closely linked to the composition and independence of the deciding body. Qualified majorities function as a meaningful safeguard only where members of the relevant body enjoy security of tenure, their mandates are staggered, and decision-making structures are sufficiently pluralistic to prevent domination by a single political actor. In the absence of such structural conditions, even formally high majority thresholds may fail to provide effective protection in practice.

63. It should be noted that in a significant number of member States the majority required for the dismissal of the director general is not regulated at all in primary legislation.

64. The Venice Commission notes that the threshold introduced by the draft amendments – a simple majority of the full Council composition – while not the narrowest conceivable standard, as it requires a majority of all members rather than merely of those present and voting, nonetheless represents a significant reduction from the current reinforced majority. Under such a threshold, dismissal could be carried by a margin that reflects the current political composition of the appointing authorities rather than a broad consensus on serious performance failures. The concern is not with the absolute level of the threshold considered in isolation – comparable arrangements exist in a number of Council of Europe member states – but rather with the direction and effect of the proposed change: lowering of an existing safeguard in a context where the other guarantees of institutional independence have not been correspondingly strengthened. The ECtHR addressed a related concern in *Manole and Others v. the Republic of Moldova*, where political influence over the public broadcaster was exercised through the replacement of senior managers with persons loyal to the government and through strict control over editorial work. The Court found that the legislative framework was flawed because it did not provide sufficient safeguards against the control of Teleradio-Moldova's senior management, and thus its editorial policy, by the government's political organ, and held that the State had failed to comply with its positive obligation under Article 10 to put in place an appropriate legislative and administrative framework to guarantee effective media pluralism.⁵⁶ In the Commission's view, the lowering of the dismissal threshold, taken together with the other amendments under consideration, would create a structural risk that dismissal decisions could be driven by political considerations, including disagreements over editorial positions, rather than by the exceptional circumstances that should justify early termination of a mandate.

65. Moreover, by significantly lowering the threshold for early dismissal, the amendment could both expose the Director General to direct political pressure and create a chilling effect on the exercise of his/her functions. A Director General who may be removed by simple majority of the Council would be more vulnerable to direct demands or instructions from those capable of forming such a majority and would in any event be placed under constant pressure to avoid editorial or managerial decisions that might displease them.

66. In this regard, the Commission recommends retaining the existing qualified majority requirement for the dismissal of the Director General as an essential safeguard against politicisation. The Commission acknowledges the concern, raised during consultations, that a qualified majority requirement may, in practice, prove difficult to attain, thereby creating a risk of institutional paralysis. However, the appropriate response to this concern is not to reduce the threshold – which would weaken protection against politically motivated dismissals – but rather to put in place an effective anti-deadlock mechanism.⁵⁷ Such a mechanism would ensure that, where the required qualified majority is not reached within a reasonable timeframe, a structured procedure is triggered to resolve the situation.

⁵⁶ ECtHR, *Manole and Others v. Moldova*, *op. cit.*, para. 111.

⁵⁷ Venice Commission, [CDL-PI\(2023\)018](#), Compilation of Venice Commission Opinions and Reports relating to Qualified Majorities and Anti-Deadlock Mechanisms in relation to the election by Parliament of Constitutional Court Judges, Prosecutors General, Members of Supreme Prosecutorial and Judicial Councils and the Ombudsman.

67. The Commission therefore recommends that the Lithuanian authorities consider introducing an anti-deadlock mechanism that strikes an appropriate balance between, on the one hand, ensuring the effective functioning of the governance bodies of the LRT and, on the other hand, maintaining robust protections against undue political interference in the dismissal of the Director General.

2. Voting method

68. Draft Law No. XVP-1119 proposes introducing secret voting for both the appointment and dismissal of the Director General of the LRT. The explanatory memoranda assert that secret voting would protect Council members from "external pressure, political or organisational influence" and enable decisions to be taken "in accordance with conscience and professional judgment", whereas open voting on sensitive matters "may restrict members' freedom to vote objectively".

69. The explanatory memoranda further argue that secret voting "does not in itself negatively affect democratic processes and does not violate any democratic principles" but rather "strengthens confidence in the Council's decision-making process" and "increases the transparency of the procedure". The Special Investigation Service in its anti-corruption assessment considered that secret voting would not eliminate the risk of external pressure on Council members; rather, it would prevent the identification and management of potential conflicts of interest, preclude any assessment of whether decisions were made in accordance with the principles of objectivity and impartiality, and make it impossible to determine whether voting was influenced by non-transparent agreements. The SIS emphasised that decisions of such importance to society and the public interest must be made as transparently as possible, and that Council members, as representatives of the public acting in the interests of the LRT and society at large, should be publicly responsible and accountable for the decisions they take. The SIS, therefore, expressed doubts as to whether the stated objective of protecting Council members from external pressure could be achieved through the introduction of secret voting.

70. During the meeting between the Venice Commission Delegation, some LRT Council members argued that secret voting would better protect their independence from the authorities that appointed them, reasoning that if the appointing bodies can observe how their appointed members vote, they may attempt to influence subsequent votes. Conversely, other LRT Council members argued that secret voting would not eliminate external pressure, would prevent the identification and management of potential conflicts of interest, and would undermine the transparency of decision-making on matters of significant public importance.

71. The Venice Commission notes that the LRT Council has experience with both voting models. The previous version of the Law on the LRT, before the June 2024 amendments, provided for a secret ballot. The change to open voting was reportedly introduced following unsuccessful attempts to elect a new Director General under the secret ballot procedure: two votes resulted in a tie (six votes for, six against). At that time, Article 12(3) of the Law on the LRT required Council resolutions to be adopted by more than half of all Council members, and in the event of a tie, the Chairman of the meeting had a casting vote. However, this casting vote mechanism could not be applied to the election of the Director General because the LRT Council regulations required that such elections be conducted by secret ballot. Exercising the casting vote would have required the Chairman to disclose his/her voting intention, thereby compromising the secrecy of the ballot that the regulations were designed to protect. Consequently, when the votes were evenly divided in the 2023 election, the only available remedy under the Law was to hold a new vote.

72. The Venice Commission acknowledges that there are advantages and disadvantages in both open and secret voting. On the one hand, open ballot provides for transparency and accountability, while secret ballot allows for potentially non-objective criteria to be used at the

level of individual votes. On the other hand, secret ballot protects from potential external influence or retaliation (notably by the appointing bodies).

73. In relation to the secrecy of vote in parliament, the Commission noted that the principle of secrecy of the vote has constitutional force in elections by universal suffrage, whereas for elections held within parliamentary chambers for individual appointments, no European standard could be identified at that time requiring a departure from the general practice of public voting.⁵⁸ In the context of judicial appointments, the Commission considered the secret ballot fundamentally incompatible with transparency requirements, observing that "the nature of a secret ballot process is to be non-reasoned" and that it "allows those voting to be influenced by extraneous considerations – not based on objective criteria" while making it "impossible for the rationale behind the voting process to be articulated".⁵⁹ The Commission considers that these principles, developed in the context of judicial appointments, apply with at least equal force to dismissal procedures. If transparency is required when conferring a mandate in order to ensure that the decision is based on objective criteria, it is all the more necessary when withdrawing one, given that early dismissal constitutes a more serious interference with the independence of the officeholder and carries a correspondingly greater risk of being motivated by political rather than objective considerations.

74. Practices regarding the dismissal of directors general of public service media vary. In some countries, a secret ballot is required by legislation (Albania, Armenia, Czech Republic, Germany, Romania, Slovakia) or established in practice (Denmark), while in others an open vote is prescribed by legislation (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland, Slovenia). In a further group of countries, the public broadcasting legislation does not specify whether the vote is to be conducted by open or secret ballot (France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom).⁶⁰

75. The Venice Commission finds that, while such limited comparative analysis does not seem to allow to establish good practices, from a rule-of-law perspective, the key issue is not whether voting should be open or secret *per se*, but whether the overall governance framework – encompassing appointment criteria, procedural safeguards, reasoning requirements, and judicial review mechanisms – provides adequate protection against arbitrary or politically motivated decisions while ensuring appropriate accountability. The choice of voting method represents one element within this broader framework and should therefore be assessed in conjunction with the other applicable safeguards rather than in isolation.

76. As concerns Lithuania, the Commission notes that although no explicit requirement for the independence or impartiality of the LRT Council members is set out in the Law, both Articles 2 and 3 stipulate that the LRT is an "independent public institution" that bases its activities on principles including legality, impartiality, objectivity, political neutrality, and independence. It follows that the Council, as the highest collegial body of the LRT (Article 10(1)), is bound by these principles. The Venice Commission observes that the Law does provide a number of safeguards aimed at

⁵⁸ Venice Commission, [CDL-AD\(2007\)034](#), Summary Report on the Secrecy of the Vote in the context of Elections by Parliament, para. 33.

⁵⁹ At the same time, the Commission has distinguished this context from internal elections among peers, such as the election of court presidents by judges of the same court, where it has supported the secret ballot as a means of protecting individuals from hierarchical pressure. However, the Commission notes that the rationale for these latter recommendations is specific to the judicial context, where the concern is to protect the internal independence of judges from hierarchical pressure within the court. See Venice Commission, [CDL-AD\(2019\)009](#), Georgia - Urgent Opinion on the selection and appointment of Supreme Court judges, paras 33 and 36, [CDL-AD\(2017\)018](#), Opinion on the Judicial System Act of Bulgaria, para. 81; [CDL-AD\(2014\)031](#), Joint Opinion of the Venice Commission and the Directorate of Human Rights (DHR) of the Directorate of Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI) of the Council of Europe, on the draft Law on Amendments to the Organic Law on General Courts of Georgia, para. 84.

⁶⁰ See European Audiovisual Observatory: Governance and independence of public service media – [2022](#) and [2025](#) publications. See also the tracking [table](#) on public service media governance and funding, as well as the [Media Legislation Database](#) of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA), *op. cit.*

ensuring the independence of Council members from their appointing authorities: a pluralistic appointment model under Article 10(2) dividing appointments equally among the President, the Seimas (with a requirement that two of its four appointees come from opposition-proposed candidates), and four civil society organisations; a comprehensive regime of incompatibilities under Article 10(4), including the mandatory suspension of political party membership; grounds for early dismissal under Article 10(5), none of which include loss of confidence or disagreement with the member's positions; a six-year term exceeding the parliamentary cycle and full decisional autonomy of the Council, whose decisions are binding on all other LRT bodies (Article 11(3)) without any right of veto, review, or instruction by the appointing authorities.

77. At the same time, the Venice Commission notes that the Law does not explicitly state that Council members serve in an independent personal capacity, nor does it prohibit the appointing authorities from issuing instructions to the members they have appointed. Newly appointed members of the LRT Council are under an obligation to suspend, rather than terminate, their possible political party membership, no cooling-off period is foreseen for former holders of political office; and dismissal decisions remain vested in the appointing authority without independent or judicial review, creating a risk that the enumerated grounds such as loss of "impeccable reputation" could be instrumentalised. Moreover, the possibility of reappointment for a second consecutive term by the same appointing authority may create an incentive for Council members to maintain favour with their appointing institutions, a concern that is more acute where the appointing authority is a political body.

78. The Venice Commission therefore recommends, that in line with Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)1 of the Committee of Ministers, the Law be supplemented with an explicit guarantee that Council members serve in an independent personal capacity, with a prohibition on instructions from the appointing authorities, and with adequate procedural safeguards – including clearly defined and objective dismissal criteria (see below), the requirement for decisions to be reasoned (see below) and the possibility of effective independent or judicial review (see below) – against politically motivated dismissals. The Commission has already recommended to maintain the requirement of qualified majority for the dismissal. Such additional guarantees would render open ballot acceptable.

79. The Commission recommends, on the other hand, that if secret voting is to be introduced, it should be accompanied in addition by comprehensive minutes of Council deliberations to be made available to the Director General.

3. Grounds for dismissal

80. Draft Law No. XVP-1119 replaces the existing reference to "loss of confidence" with two specific grounds for dismissal: (a) improper performance of the Director General's statutory functions; or (b) non-approval of the annual activity report by the Council.

81. The explanatory memoranda criticise the existing ground for dismissal based on "public interest" as "legally undefined, easily subject to manipulation", and incapable of allowing objective evaluation of the Director General's performance. They propose instead that dismissal be based on failure to properly perform statutory functions or non-approval of the annual activity report, which are presented as "clear, visible and objective criteria" that would ensure decisions are made "based on actual performance results rather than abstract concepts". The memoranda further assert that these amendments would protect the Director General from "unfounded or politicised decisions" while strengthening the Council's supervisory capacity.

82. The Seimas Legal Department found this justification unpersuasive. Referring to the constitutional doctrine of institutional independence developed by the Constitutional Court of Lithuania, the Legal Department emphasised that the Director General is appointed through public competition – not on the basis of political confidence – creating a legitimate expectation

of serving the full statutory term. Dismissal before expiry must therefore be based on clearly established grounds, such as where the Director General no longer meets the prescribed requirements or where continuing in office would objectively prevent the implementation of the LRT's tasks. The Legal Department concluded that the proposed ground of "improper performance" is, contrary to the explanatory memoranda's assertions, insufficiently defined: due to its subjective and undefined content, even a minor or insignificant breach of duty could formally be regarded as improper performance. This ground cannot, therefore, be considered objective or sufficient to justify dismissal. The Law should either specify the circumstances constituting serious or substantial breaches, or require the Council to demonstrate that continued service would not ensure the implementation of the LRT's tasks – requirements absent from the proposed amendments.

83. The Venice Commission recalls that the legal framework governing public service media "should clearly stipulate their editorial independence and institutional autonomy",⁶¹ that "the appointments are made for a specified term that can only be shortened in limited and legally defined circumstances – which should not include differences over editorial positions or decisions"⁶² and that "Decisions on dismissal of the head of management or the members of the management board of public service media providers before the end of their term of office shall be duly justified, may be taken only exceptionally where they no longer fulfil the conditions required for the performance of their duties according to criteria laid down in advance at national level, shall be subject to prior notification to the persons concerned and shall include the possibility of judicial review".⁶³

84. The Commission notes that Article 14 of the Law on the LRT does not specify which failures, or what degree of seriousness, would justify early dismissal, nor does it define what constitutes 'improper' performance. This open-ended formulation creates a risk of broad and arbitrary interpretation, incompatible with the requirements of legal certainty and foreseeability, and effectively lowers the threshold for early termination below the level of exceptional circumstances that would objectively prevent the fulfilment of the LRT's tasks.

85. During the delegation's visit, a number of interlocutors expressed concern that vague and indeterminate formulations in the draft Law, such as references to "improper" performance of duties, which are not defined therein, could give rise to unpredictable and expansive interpretation in practice. The Commission recalls that legal texts must be written in plain, clear and understandable language, and that the principle of foreseeability requires that a law be formulated with sufficient precision to enable those subject to it to regulate their conduct and organise their affairs accordingly. A legal provision must therefore be foreseeable as to both its legal and factual effects, so that its application does not depend on subjective or arbitrary interpretation.⁶⁴ The Commission wishes to stress that vague and indeterminate formulations, such as references to "improper" performance of duties, which are not defined in the draft law, create a significant risk of unpredictable and expansive interpretation in practice, leading to legal uncertainty and undermining the State's positive obligation "to put in place an appropriate legislative and administrative framework".

86. The Commission therefore recommends establishing clear and objective criteria for the early dismissal of the LRT Director General, limited to exceptional circumstances and ensuring that any dismissal decision is duly reasoned and subject to effective judicial review.

87. Turning to the second dismissal ground, the Commission notes that annual activity reports typically include assessments of programming decisions, editorial priorities, and strategic

⁶¹ Recommendation [No. R\(96\)10](#) *op. cit.*, Guideline I.

⁶² CM/Rec(2012)1, *op. cit.*, para. 27.

⁶³ Article 5(2) of the EMFA.

⁶⁴ Updated Rule of Law Checklist, Benchmark A.I., Legal Certainty, paras 48-50.

choices. Making non-approval of such a report an autonomous ground for dismissal raises two interrelated concerns. First, it creates a risk that the Director General could be removed based on the Council's disagreement with editorial or programming decisions, which would be difficult to reconcile with the principle that dismissal grounds should not include disagreements over editorial positions or editorial decisions. Second, and more fundamentally, the Council could simply withhold approval of the annual report as an indirect means for removing the Director General, regardless of the report's actual content or quality. In the absence of adequate safeguards, this ground for dismissal may undermine the fixed-term nature of the appointment and create a mechanism for indirect editorial interference.

88. The Commission recommends excluding the non-approval of the annual activity report as a ground for the early dismissal of the Director General.

4. Temporal scope of the draft amendments

89. The Venice Commission notes that the entry into force of Draft Law No. XVP-1119 was planned for 1 January 2026. The Draft Law contains no transitional provisions limiting its application to Directors General appointed after entry into force. The amendments would therefore apply to the current Director General.

90. In its anti-corruption assessment, the Special Investigation Service (SIS) noted that, to ensure legislative transparency and avoid potential corruption risks, changes to the legal status of heads of public sector entities should generally not take effect during their current term of office but rather from the start of a new term. Applying new dismissal grounds to an incumbent would create a precedent that is flawed from an anti-corruption perspective, suggest that the legislation is directed against a specific person rather than being a systemic reform, and may expose the process to risks of political influence or tailored regulation. The SIS accordingly recommended that the new provisions on dismissal enter into force only at the end of the current Director General's term of office.

91. The Venice Commission, referring to its Updated Rule of Law Checklist, recalls that, in civil and administrative law, retroactivity may adversely affect rights and legal interests (exceptions apply only to the financial and tax domains, if in the public interest and in conformity with the principle of proportionality).⁶⁵

92. During the country visit, several interlocutors indicated that parts of the public perceive the amendments as directed against the current Director General. Whether or not this perception is accurate, the retrospective application of less protective rules would create the appearance of *ad personam* legislation and undermine confidence in the stability of public service media leadership.

93. The Commission recalls that in the *Baka* case, the ECtHR found a violation of Article 10 ECHR, holding that there was *prima facie* evidence of a causal link between the applicant's exercise of his freedom of expression and the premature termination of his mandate as President of the Supreme Court.⁶⁶ The ECtHR also found a violation of Article 6, para. 1 ECHR, holding that the legislative amendments in question had been directed at a specific group of clearly identifiable persons, the judicial members of the National Council of the Judiciary and that its primary purpose was to remove them from their seats on that body. "It was a one-off statutory amendment that terminated *ex lege* the constitutionally prescribed tenure of the NCJ's judicial members. The Court has already held that laws which are directed against specific persons are contrary to the rule of law".⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, para. 59.

⁶⁶ ECtHR, *Baka v. Hungary* [GC], no. [20261/12](#), 23 June 2016, paras 148-149.

⁶⁷ ECtHR, *Grzęda v. Poland* [GC], no. [43572/18](#), 15 March 2022, para. 299.

94. The Commission recalls that the governance arrangements for public service media, including the procedures for appointing and dismissing senior leadership, must be designed to minimise the risk of political instrumentalisation. In particular, the Commission reiterates that the procedures for appointing and dismissing the Director General of the LRT must be designed to minimise the risk of undue political influence over the management of the public broadcaster.⁶⁸ Drawing in this respect on the principles for the protection of judicial independence, the Commission considers that the underlying principle – that fixed-term appointments to independent institutions should be protected from premature termination through targeted legislative changes, particularly where such changes appear motivated by dissatisfaction with the officeholder's exercise of their functions – is applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to the governance of public service media. Both contexts involve institutions whose independence from political interference is essential to their proper functioning in a democratic society: in the case of the judiciary, to uphold the rule of law; in the case of public service broadcasting, to safeguard media pluralism and the public's right to receive independent information. The Commission also recalls that public service media play a particular role in a democratic society by contributing to informed public debate and by exercising a public watchdog function in relation to those in power. This role presupposes not only editorial freedom, but also institutional conditions that enable public service media to operate without undue pressure or influence. Measures affecting the governance or funding of a public service broadcaster should therefore be assessed with particular care, as they may have implications for the broadcaster's capacity to carry out this function effectively and independently. The Commission therefore emphasises that, if amendments to dismissal procedures are deemed necessary, they should be applied prospectively – i.e., only to directors general appointed after the amendments enter into force.

95. In the view of the Venice Commission, prospective application is not merely a matter of legislative technique but a substantive safeguard, ensuring that changes to dismissal procedures are understood as systemic reforms of general application rather than measures targeting a specific incumbent. Such an approach would preserve the integrity of the legislative process, protect the independence of public service media leadership, and align the draft law with established European standards.

96. The Commission therefore recommends that any revised dismissal procedures apply only to Directors General appointed after the entry into force of the amendments, thereby avoiding the appearance of *ad personam* legislation.

V. Conclusion

97. At the request of the Director General of the Lithuanian National Radio and Television (LRT), the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe assessed Draft Law No. XV-618 on the reduction of the LRT's funding and draft laws No. XVP-1052 and No. XVP-1119 on the procedure of dismissal of the Director General of the LRT.

98. Regarding the legislative process, the Commission notes that the process by which the amendments to the Law on the LRT were examined and adopted raises concerns regarding their consistency with European good practices in democratic law-making. The amendments relating to the funding under Law No. XV-618 were submitted only two weeks before adoption, without a revised explanatory memorandum or impact assessment, and entered into force just before the start of the 2026 budgetary year. Draft Law No. XVP-1119 on dismissal procedures was fast-tracked under the urgent procedure despite this being reserved for exceptional circumstances

⁶⁸ See Venice Commission, [CDL-AD\(2015\)015](#), Opinion on Media Legislation (ACT CLXXXV on Media Services and on the Mass Media, Act CIV on the Freedom of the Press, and the Legislation on Taxation of Advertisement Revenues of Mass Media) of Hungary, paras. 65, 79-80 and 86-88; Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)1 *op. cit.*, Appendix, Guiding Principles; Recommendation No. R (96) 10 of the Committee of Ministers, *op. cit.*, Appendix, Sections II, III and V; Article 5(2) of the European Media Freedom Act.

under the Statute of the Seimas. The process has thus so far not complied with the requirements of the Updated Rule of Law Checklist that legislative procedures be efficient, transparent, inclusive, and democratic, and that major reforms be excluded from urgent procedures. The Commission stresses that any resulting legislative proposals should be examined through the ordinary parliamentary procedure, with thorough analysis, impact assessment, and consultations with national stakeholders.

99. Regarding the amendments on the funding of the LRT, the Commission is of the view that these changes were adopted without an impact assessment or meaningful consultation with the LRT, and without a transitional period, contrary to the requirements for adequate, sustainable, and predictable funding and to the State's positive obligations under Article 10 ECHR to safeguard media pluralism and editorial independence. Ensuring sufficient financial capacity for the public broadcaster to carry out its mission is all the more important given Lithuania's exposed security environment and the reported growing challenges posed by foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI).

100. Regarding the voting threshold, the Commission finds that lowering the requirement from two-third to simple majority would create a risk of politically motivated dismissals, which would be incompatible with the State's positive obligation under Article 10 ECHR. As to the voting method, the Commission finds that the principal safeguards lie not in the choice between open and secret voting *per se*, but in the combination of clearly defined dismissal grounds, high majority thresholds, and effective procedural safeguards. Concerning the grounds for dismissal, the Commission finds that "improper performance of statutory functions" is insufficiently defined, and making non-approval of the annual activity report a ground for dismissal risks enabling removal based on editorial disagreements. Furthermore, the absence of transitional provisions means that the amendments would apply retroactively to the current Director General.

101. Given the matters the (draft) amendments aim to regulate, the existing standards, and the particular circumstances described above, the Venice Commission considers it important to analyse the potential cumulative effect of the amendments to the Law on the LRT, both in a narrower and in a broader context. While each set of measures raises distinct issues, their interaction warrants particular attention, as financial constraints and changes to governance arrangements may jointly influence the conditions under which the public service broadcaster operates. Measures that cumulatively weaken the financial and institutional safeguards of the LRT risk undermining its capacity to perform this role and are therefore difficult to reconcile with the State's positive obligation under Article 10 ECHR to act as the ultimate guarantor of media pluralism. Taken together, the funding constraints and the proposed governance amendments may create conditions that increase vulnerability to political pressure and self-censorship, rather than strengthening accountability.

102. In view of the above, the Venice Commission makes the following key recommendations and notes that further detailed recommendations are to be found in the text of this Opinion:

- A. To conduct a thorough analysis, an impact assessment, and consultations with the national stakeholders for the continuation of the pending legislative process.
- B. To amend paragraph 5 of Article 19 of the Law on the LRT concerning the funding based on a comprehensive assessment, carried out in close consultation with the LRT and other stakeholders concerned, of whether the current funding model is adequate to enable the LRT to fulfil its public service remit effectively.
- C. To retain the existing qualified majority requirement for the dismissal of the Director General, and to consider introducing an effective anti-deadlock mechanism.
- D. To introduce additional guarantees of independence:

- To supplement the Law with an explicit guarantee that Council members serve in an independent personal capacity, with a prohibition on instructions from the appointing authorities and with adequate procedural safeguards – including clearly defined and objective dismissal criteria, the requirement for decisions to be reasoned and the possibility of effective independent or judicial review (see point E below) – against politically motivated dismissals.
 - If secret voting is to be introduced, it should be accompanied, in addition to the above-mentioned safeguards, by comprehensive minutes of Council deliberations to be made available to the Director General.
- E. To establish clear and objective criteria for the early dismissal of the LRT Director General, limited to exceptional circumstances and ensuring that any dismissal decision is duly reasoned and subject to effective judicial review; to remove the non-approval of the annual activity report as a ground for the early dismissal of the Director General.
- F. To ensure that any revised dismissal procedures apply only to Directors General appointed after the entry into force of the amendments, thereby avoiding the appearance of *ad personam* legislation.

103. The Venice Commission remains at the disposal of the LRT and the Lithuanian authorities for further assistance in this matter.