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Europe/Ex-USSR - Latvia

Radio interference

Is Latvia eyeing a Hungarian-style Media Council?

29 June 2012

Reporters Without Borders is deeply concerned by the unprecedented interference by Latvia's [National Council for Electronic Mass Media \(NEPLP\)](#) in the editorial policy of a state-run radio station.

"Complaints by a member of the NEPLP about the choice of guests on a political programme on [Latvijas Radio](#) are not only improper but also frankly worrying," the press freedom organization said.

"The incident casts suspicion on the independence of the NEPLP, whose structure was reformed by Parliament in July 2010. Does Latvia have an eye on the example of [Hungary's politicised and all-powerful Media Council](#)?"

"Political pressure, reforms, draft legislation – there are many negative signs throughout the European Union that seriously compromise the effectiveness of the message from Brussels to candidate and partner countries.

"Leaving aside the Hungarian example, the European Commission must respond urgently and with determination to this dangerous tendency."

On 26 June, the noted journalist **Aidis Tomsons** invited three former senior advisers to previous prime ministers on to the programme "Krustpunkti" broadcast by *Latvijas Radio*. The three, Jurgis Liepnieks, Dans Titavs and Arnis Lapins, belonged to different parties and had retired from politics.

After the programme a NEPLP member, Aija Calite-Dulevska expressed her displeasure and threatened to intervene in future to restrict the choice of guests. "I hope *Latvijas Radio* gets paid," she said, hinting at corruption at the station.

Her comment has aroused incredulity and anger among journalists. Most commentators said it was likely that she objected to critical comments made about the ruling party Vienotiba by the guests, only one of whom was of the same political hue.

"What is happening here is approaching political pressure," said **Dzintris Kolats**, head of news at *LTV* and former director-general of *Latvijas Radio*. **Dzeina Tamulevica** of the daily *Diena* wondered: "Journalists were criticized for letting some people express their opinions? Do we live in a real democracy?"

Since this year, members of the NEPLP are appointed by the Parliament after formal consultations with NGOs. Most members are non-professionals who are close to the ruling party.

Reporters Without Borders will continue to follow developments closely.
