On 3 July 2019, as part of a reform of the judiciary, the Albanian Council of Ministers approved a series of amendments known as the “anti-defamation package” and aiming, according to the authorities, at fighting against defamation.

If passed by Parliament, the proposed amendments to the laws No. 9918 “On electronic communications in the Republic of Albania” and No. 97/2013 “On Audio Visual Media in the Republic of Albania” would empower a state administrative body (the Audio Visual Media Authority) to regulate content published by online media. The draft bills seek to tighten the control over online media, as the Complaints Council, which is part of the Audio Visual Media Authority, could increase censorship by ordering the removal of online content on grounds of protecting the citizens’ “dignity and privacy”.

Several international organisations joined Albanian civil society and independent media in calling the government to withdraw these bills.

NEW 14 Jan 2020: On 12 January 2020, Albanian President Ilir Meta vetoed the latest amendments to the two laws “on audiovisual media” and “on electronic communications” arguing that both laws violate the fundamental constitutional principles of a democracy, the right to freedom of expression, freedom of the press and the right to information, the previous decisions of the Constitutional Court, the European Convention on Human Rights. According to the President, the new legislative package “would produce intimidation and self-censorship, unlawful closure or suspension of electronic media, directly affecting the quality and objectivity of information, which would result in providing the public with information other than facts, which would mislead the society not only in seeking their rights, but in fulfilling
civic responsibilities for building and preserving the democracy.” Following the President’s decision, the parliament can either accept his decree and start over the legislative process, or dismiss it with a simple majority. support document http://www.tiranatimes.com/?p=143898

Article published by Tirana Times: "President returns anti-libel law to parliament"

20 Dec 2019: On 18 December 2019, the Albanian parliament approved the two media laws known as the “anti-defamation package”. 82 MPs voted in favour, 13 against and 5 MPs abstained. Media freedom organisations caution that the package is likely to replace the current self-regulation of online media by state-regulation, and argue that cosmetic changes made at the last minute do not address all the concerns raised by the European Union, the Council of Europe and Human Rights Commissioner Dunja Mijatovic. They have urged the President of Albania not to enact these laws.

26 Nov 2019: On 20 November 2019, a majority of the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA) board voted against the so-called “anti-defamation package”. The authority was consulted in the framework of the legislative process.

Article publishjhed on exit.al news portal: "Audiovisual Media Authority Votes Not to Approve ‘Anti-Defamation’ Law"

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Article published by Balkan Insights: "EU Cautions Albania Against Restricting Online Media"

Statement from Reporters without Borders (RSF): Albania: Government should withdraw “anti-defamation” legislative package introducing state regulation of online media outlets

Article published by Albania Daily News: 'Albania's Road to EU Is Impossible without Media Freedom'

AEJ Statement on the draft media law proposed by the Albanian government

FOLLOW-UPS

NEW On 22 January 2020, the Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly requested an opinion of the Venice
Commission concerning the Albanian Law no. 97/2013 ‘on Audiovisual Media Service’.

🔗 News published on the Venice Commission's website

14 Jan 2020 | NEW OSCE Media Freedom Representative expresses readiness to continue working with Albanian authorities to improve media legislation.

🔗 Statement by Harlem Désir

17 Dec 2019 | CoE Human Rights Commissioner urges Albania’s Parliament to review bills which restrict freedom of expression.

🔗 Statement by Dunja Mijatović

10 Dec 2019 | OSCE Media Freedom Representative recommends further improvements to laws on online media in Albania.

🔗 Statement by Harlem Désir

29 Jul 2019 | OSCE Media Freedom Representative presents new review of laws on online media in Albania, recommends further improvements

🔗 Statement by Harlem Désir, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media