On 11 September 2020, the Media Council of the National Media and Communications Authority (ORTT) announced it would not extend the license for Klubrádió, the last remaining independent radio station in Hungary. The decision means that the Budapest-based commercial talk and news radio station’s license will expire on February 14, 2021, potentially forcing it off the airwaves for good. Justifying its ruling, the Media Council, which is stacked with figures supportive of the ruling FIDESZ party, said that during the last seven years Klubradio had repeatedly violated Hungary’s Media Law. In a statement the station said it believed the decision "does not correspond to reality." It added: “The leaders and employees of Klubrádió are looking for legal and other means in order to ensure that Hungary’s last independent radio, which authentically informs hundreds of thousands of people every day, is not muted.” András Arató, chairman of the Board of Directors of Klubrádió, previously denied the station had committed violations that could result in its license extension rejected. A new tender will be launched for its current frequency, Budapest FM 92.9 MHz. Klubrádió’s critical coverage has long made it a target of the Orbán government. The station has been progressively stripped of its frequencies outside the capital, confining it to Budapest. Moreover, when its previous license expired in February 2011, the Media Council refused to extend the license for two years despite three court rulings in the station’s favour. A grass-roots campaign by thousands of listeners added to growing pressure and Klubrádió was awarded a long-term frequency in March 2013. Over the last several years the Media Council has been accused of contributing to the dramatic decline in the diversity of Hungary’s media by selectively interpreting the law to allow FIDESZ and the KESMA foundation to slowly take greater control over the country’s media market. Its latest efforts to silence Klubrádió reflect the government’s strategy of abusing control of state institutions and state resources to bias the media market against independent outlets or force them out completely. This strategy also includes the weaponization of state advertising spending, which is massively tilted toward pro-government media and which is the subject of a formal state aid complaint to
which the European Commission has yet to respond. The Hungarian broadcast sector is dominated by pro-government media. The only remaining independent television station is the foreign-owned commercial broadcaster RTL Klub, whose evening news programme carries stories critical of the government. Klubrádió is the last bulwark in the radio sector, with the radio waves outside Budapest already carrying only pro-government news.

**UPDATES**

**NEW**  **15 Mar 2021**: Klubradio filed an application with the National Media and Communications Authority to regain the broadcasting frequency it held until recently. It was the only bidder left in the tender for that frequency. On 11 March 2021, the media regulator denied the request, on the grounds that the application contained errors and did not meet basic requirements for radio broadcasting. Klubradio has 15 days to appeal the decision.

- Article published by Bloomberg: "Hungary Again Rejects Sole Opposition Radio's Bid for Frequency"

**NEW**  **09 Feb 2021**: On 9 February 2021, the Budapest Court rejected the appeal of Klubradio against the decision of the media regulator refusing the renewal of its operating license, which expires on 14 February. From next week, the independent radio won't be able to broadcast on air. The head of Klubradio announced that the station would appeal the ruling to the Supreme Court.

- Article published by France 24: "Top Hungary independent radio forced off air: station head"
- AEJ statement: "AEJ calls for Europe-wide protests after “shameful” court ruling against Klubradio"

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- IPI Statement: "Hungary’s last independent radio station could be forced off airwaves"
- Article published by Balkan Insight: "Hungary’s last independent radio station at risk"

**STATE REPLIES**

**01 Oct 2020** | Reply from the Hungarian authorities

- Information received from the Permanent Representation of Hungary to the Council of Europe
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