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Draft Law Threatens Independence of AGERPRES News Agency

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ State

CATEGORY  ▶ Other acts having chilling effects on media freedom


PARTNER: EFJ/IFJ, RSF

A new draft law, which risks threatening the independence of the national news agency AGERPRES, will be discussed on 11 October 2017 by the Romanian Parliament. The draft law foresees that any political majority could decide to dismiss the director-general by rejecting AGERPRES' annual report, whereas the current law stipulates that the director-general has a 5-year mandate and cannot be biased, meaning promoting the ideas, the programmes and the activities of the political parties. Such provisions would have the same impact as the legislation regulating the management of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Corporation (SRR) and the Romanian National Television Corporation (SRTV): following each election, the SRR and SRTV administration boards can be dismissed before the end of their mandates to reflect the new political forces and many media freedom organisations had denounced this provision as an instrument to politicize the public service media.

In a letter addressed to Parliament, AGERPRES' general-director and the Romanian trade union of journalists said: "We believe that the proposed modification opens the path to a political subordination of the AGERPRES management. (...) Any political force could find that the director-general is not 'loyal' enough to the government, regardless of the quality of the work, for political reasons only. It must be abandoned." The draft law has been initiated and submitted by Lucian Romascanu, now Minister of Culture, while he was president of the Culture Committee of the Romanian Senate. The proposal was also signed by four other senators.

UPDATES

31 Oct 2017: On 30 October 2017, the Romanian Senate voted the law with 64 votes in favour, 16 against and 27 abstentions. The law is now supposed to be submitted to the National Assembly.

 **Press statement from Alexandru Giboi, AGERPRES General Director**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[➔ EFJ statement: "Romania: Draft law threatens independence of AGERPRES news agency"](#)

STATE REPLIES



13 Nov 2017 | Response from the Romanian authorities

[➔ Information provided by the Romanian authorities](#)

FOLLOW-UPS



02 May 2017 | The CoE Commissioner for Human Rights details the prerequisites for well-funded and strong public service media.

[➔ Comment by the Commissioner for Human Rights: "Public service broadcasting under threat in Europe"](#)

RELEVANT COE INSTRUMENTS

15 Dec 2016 | Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on public service media governance (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 15 February 2012 at the 1134th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)

[➔ Read Recommendation](#)

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