

EFJ Calls on Hungarian Parliament to Respect Rule of Law over Radio Frequencies' Licences

Today the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) has called on the Hungarian legislators to reconsider a "dangerous proposal" for press freedom.

On Friday 18 May, Hungary's parliament approved amendments to the country's media law. Some changes were made in light of the Constitutional Court's ruling passed last December, but journalists say that some parts of the proposals are extremely controversial such as one which states that only the Media Council would be authorised to approve broadcasting agreements, which means that courts will no longer have the power to shape or revise the rules of these agreements. Another amendment proposes that the Media Council will not even have the obligation to conclude a contract. In other terms, even if a tender has a clear winner, the Media Council will have the right to ignore the results of the tender. The proposal also states that the rule should be applied with retroactive effect in the case of ongoing procedures.

The EFJ says that these proposals clearly arise from the *Klubradio* case last year, when *Klubradio*, an independent community radio, won the bid to operate a frequency, but the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH) refused to sign the broadcasting contract, arguing that one media owner should operate only one radio station in a given city. The decision was then over-ruled by the Budapest Metropolitan Court.

"Hungary's media laws have been attracting Europe's attention since last year. While political institutions and professional organisations like the EFJ keep asking for democratic changes, we are appalled by this new political interference in media governance," said the EFJ President Arne König. "These proposals are dangerous for democracy and for journalism as public good since politically motivated groups would be put above the law."

The EFJ reminds that members of the Media Council are nominated for a period of nine years according to political criteria.

With the final vote on these amendments due to take place tomorrow on 24 May, the EFJ and its affiliates, the journalists association MUOSZ and the Hungarian Press Union, are urging the Parliament to reconsider their decision in the name of the respect of the rule of law and international standards of press freedom.

The EFJ has been campaigning against the Hungarian media law since its implementation and last week the [Council of Europe also published a critical assessment](#) of the current version of the law.

The EFJ is the European group of the International Federation of Journalists

The EFJ represents over 260,000 journalists in 30 countries

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