

Decision of Latvia to suspend broadcast of the TV channel 'Rossiya RTR' compatible with EU law

The European Commission decided, on 7 May 2021, that the Latvian regulator's decision to suspend the retransmission of the channel Rossiya RTR for 12 months, due to incitement to violence or hatred, complies with EU law.



© iStock by GettyImages - 913589018 metamorworks

The Latvian authorities informed the Commission in February 2021 that the channel 'Rossiya RTR', which broadcasted in Russian via satellite to Latvia from Sweden, had been broadcasting content that could be considered as incitement to violence or hatred.

In particular, the language used during some programmes on 'Roossiya RTR' contained references to military destruction and occupation and called for military actions against several countries, including among others Latvia and other Baltic states. The statements in the concerned programmes have the potential to create tensions and reactions of animosity within the population of Latvia and of other countries. The Latvian authorities therefore decided to suspend the retransmission of the channel for a period of 12 months.

The Commission assessed the compliance with EU law of the measures taken by the Latvian regulator, on the basis of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD). The Directive prohibits the incitement to violence or hatred. It establishes the procedure to follow by a Member State when it considers that this prohibition has not been respected by a media service provider established in another Member State, according to the AVMSD rules. Latvia demonstrated that there have been

manifest, serious and grave infringements of the prohibition of incitement to violence or hatred.

The Commission, after carefully analysing the case and consulting the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA), on 7 May 2021 decided that Latvia's temporary suspension in its territory of the broadcasts of Rossiya RTR is proportionate and justified.

In 2019, the Commission reached the same conclusion regarding the temporary suspension for three months of the same channel. In 2015, 2017 and 2018, the Commission considered that temporary suspensions of the retransmission of 'RTR Planeta' on the basis of incitement to hatred decided by Lithuania were compatible with EU law.

The decision highlights once again the importance of the fight against hate speech and incitement to violence. The revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive steps up efforts to fight against incitement to violence and hatred by extending, in line with Article 21 of the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights, the grounds on the basis of which audiovisual content may be considered incitement to violence and hatred. Such grounds include for example, sex, disability, age, political or other opinions, and sexual orientation.

Commission decision LV

Commission decision EN

Commission decision FR

Commission decision DE

Related topics

Supporting media and digital culture
Audiovisual & Media Services

Source URL:

<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/news/decision-latvia-suspend-broadcast-tv-channel-rossiya-rtr-compatible-eu-law>