

Report

November 2014 to March 2015

NEPLP Member Gints Grūbe steps down

Gints Grūbe, a Member of the National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP), has resigned. At the NEPLP, Gints Grūbe was responsible for supervising the government-run SIA “Latvijas Televīzija” (Latvian Television) and co-ordinating the establishment of the public medium. Gints Grūbe resigned after receiving an offer to participate in several large-scale feature film projects in the near future, realising that he would be unable to combine his creative efforts with the duties of a NEPLP member.

The Public Media

NEPLP confirms Latvian Radio’s intention to create alternative culture channel

The NEPLP has approved the State SIA “Latvijas Radio” (Latvian Radio, LR) intention to create a new alternative (non-profit) culture and music programme LR6. NEPLP also decided to issue to LR the proper broadcasting permit on the Riga wavelength. The new alternative (non-profit) culture programme will be created in collaboration with the independent producer “NABA”. The new programme is part of the LR public service remit plan for 2015. The operations and broadcasting of the LR6 studio is financed by the University of Latvia.

LR4 coverage of eastern regions ensured

The NEPLP in collaboration with the State JSC “Elektroniskie sakari” (“Electronic Communications”) and other proper institutions have ensured coverage of the eastern province of Latgale by the societal integration programme of the Latvian Radio (LR4), which broadcasts in Russian and other ethnic minority languages. Several transmitters have been set up in the areas near the borders with Belarus and Russia, and the coverage for the largest cities in Latgale, Rēzekne and Daugavpils, has been increased by exchanging several LR wavelengths.

NEPLP appoints new Board for Latvian Radio

The NEPLP has confirmed a new, expanded Board for the State SIA “Latvijas Radio” (Latvian Radio, LR). Aldis Pauliņš was unanimously voted in as the Chairman of the LR Board, and the majority of the NEPLP members supported appointing Sigita Kirilka a member of the LR Board in charge of programme development matters, and Uldis Lavrinovičs a member of the LR board responsible for procurement matters. The previous Board member Jānis Siksnis’ term in office ended on January 15, 2015. The new Board has been appointed for a period of three years.

NEPLP approves setting up “Latvijas Televīzija” Programme 3 to broadcast in Russian

During a meeting on March 19, the NEPLP approved the establishment of State SIA “Latvijas Televīzija” (Latvian Television, LTV) Programme 3 that would broadcast in the Russian language. According to the NEPLP decision, LTV3 content will be presented in the Russian language and it will be broadcast in the entire territory of Latvia. Regional/local content (“regional window”) is to be generated for the residents of Latgale Province.

News from the world of the electronic mass media

TV competition on diaspora themes

The NEPLP has confirmed the results of the competition “Creation of Video Materials and Broadcasts on the Diaspora Theme in 2014”, naming SIA “TV3 Latvia” and “IMLO Lat-Ireland LTD” as the winners. The competition’s funds were divided in half, with EUR 11,383 for every winner that will be used to film new footage. The competition was organised in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The videos focused on four countries with sizeable Latvian communities – Ireland, Northern Ireland, Great Britain, and Denmark. The objective of the competition was to encourage the creation of TV stories and broadcasts about Latvian communities in the respective countries to make them available to the diaspora, as well as make them available on the Internet and support the electronic mass media and producers in the countries where Latvian communities reside.

NEPLP approves principles for allocating part of the public service remit to commercial media

The NEPLP has approved principles to be observed in the allocation of the public service remit to commercial electronic mass media with the purpose of expanding the public service remit coverage, increasing audiences thereof, and ensuring diversity of information and form, thereby bolstering the national information space and supporting the development of media environment. According to the NEPLP decision, the public service remit is primarily delivered through public electronic mass media, but individual broadcasts or programmes may be delegated by the NEPLP, pursuant to the National Strategy for the Development of the Electronic Mass Media Sector, to other electronic mass media selected through competition, if the total amount disbursed to such electronic mass media for the delivery of public service remit in a given year does not exceed 15% of the funding made available for implementation of the public service remit. According to the document endorsed by the NEPLP, the amount of financing for commercial electronic mass media has to increase at least in proportion to the amount by which financing for the public media increases.

International conference “Strengthening the European Audiovisual Media Market for the Development of the European Identity” in Riga, 9-10 March

The Conference was organised by the the National Electronic Mass Media Council of Latvia, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia and, supported and co-funded by the European Commission. More than 200 media experts, regulators and policy makers from all 28 EU Member States exchanged experiences and opinions at the international conference on “Strengthening the European Audiovisual Media Market for the Development of the European Identity” on 9–10 March in Riga. The EU Member State delegates agreed on the need to improve media literacy and the protection of minors in the European information space and to strengthen the role of media regulators in monitoring media content and implementing the country of origin principle. There are, for example, some television channels under the jurisdiction of one Member State which are without doubt targeting the audiences of other Member States with content hostile to those States. There was general agreement among the experts that the EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive needs to be updated.

Radio and Television Day

The NEPLP has organised the annual Radio and Television Day, which included a media criticism and research conference, discussions, presentations, and the “Trailblazer” (“Celmlauzis”) award ceremony celebrating innovation of the Latvian electronic mass media. The NEPLP presented the award for the most notable innovation in television and radio in 2014 to the Latvian Television’s “Broadcast Rediscovering Latvia – TE!” (“Latvijas jaunatklāšana sraidījums - TE!”) in recognition of creativity in the TV broadcast’s screenplay, directorial achievement, form, and visuals.

NEPLP approves programme for the development of electronic mass media in Latgale

The NEPLP has approved a programme for the development of the electronic mass media in Latgale. The main objective of the programme is to strengthen the informational link between the eastern province of Latgale with the other provinces of Latvia, and to guarantee that residents living near the borders with Russia and Belarus receive relevant information about the developments in Latvia and the world. The programme also includes investments, which have no immediate effect on the state budget, in the generation of public medium content with the aim of further integration of matters concerning Latgale in the Latvian Radio and Latvian Television programmes, as well as actions to limit unlawful distribution of audiovisual content in Latgale, measures to consolidate the capacity of the NEPLP, and initiatives fostering studies of communication sciences at universities and colleges of Latgale.

Amendments to the law

Amendments concerning the use of language on the radio

In October, the Saeima passed amendments to the Law on Electronic Mass Media proposed by the NEPLP, intended to structure the use of language in radio broadcasts. Before the amendments, transmission permits issued to the electronic mass media and radio stations stipulated a certain proportion of the use of Latvian language and foreign languages. For instance, if a permit set a 30% proportion for the use of the Latvian language in a radio targeted at a non-Latvian audience, one-third of all material broadcast within a 24 hour period (excluding music) had to be in Latvian. In terms of the integration policy, this may seem to be logical, but in reality it was not happening as stated “on paper”. The amendments introduce a uniform language standard – either a radio station broadcasts in Latvian or in a foreign language. This provision does not apply to music. The amendments also stipulate that own broadcasts must comprise no less than 90% of the total weekly broadcasting time in the radio programmes of the electronic mass media.

Amendments to the Latvian Administrative Violations Code

Amendments to the Latvian Administrative Violations Code, drawn up by the NEPLP, came into force in 2014. The amendments provide that an electronic mass medium broadcasting or retransmitting programmes without a proper broadcasting or retransmission permit issued by the NEPLP, or one that had its broadcasting or retransmission permit revoked, or one whose permit has expired or was suspended, will be imposed a fine: EUR 100 to EUR 700 for natural persons and EUR 2,000 to EUR 14,000 for legal persons.

Amendments to the Electronic Mass Media Law

Amendments to the Law on Electronic Mass Media came into force in 2014, which – at the initiative of the NEPLP – stipulate that the NEPLP has “the right to arrive (including without a prior warning) at any electronic mass medium for the purpose of carrying out an inspection, or enter (including without prior warning) the property the given electronic mass owns, possesses, or uses, for the purposes of enforcement of public administration tasks assigned to the Council under this law”.