

Ainars Dimants, Ph.D.

Professor in Communication Theory, Turība University, Riga, Latvia

ainars.dimants@turiba.lv, dimants@latnet.lv

Latvian PBS on the media policy crossroads to PSM

This paper critically examines Latvian media policy from the point of view of public value theory regarding management of public service media.

Since 1992 Latvian Television (LTV, 1954) and Latvian Radio (LR, 1925) officially, i.e. according to the law, are independent public service media organizations, consequently two legal entities.

In fact LTV and LR are two state enterprises with one supervising council (five members) elected by parliament according to political proportionality – National Electronic Media Council (NEPLP).

Since 2011 Latvian government is slowly deciding plans for the reform and creation of a unified PSM corporation, not just PSB, i.e. including not only radio and TV broadcasting but multimedia approach, especially on the Internet platform, due to media convergence.

On January 7 2013 NEPLP approved a new PSM policy paper elaborated by national and international media experts and prescribing, firstly, public value test of PSB.

Secondly, unifying PSB into one legal entity with own special Council for PSM, eliminating political proportionality by Council's election and structurally securing editorial independence and pluralism. Policy paper foresees Audience Council with ombudsman functions too.

Like also, thirdly, the implementation of earmarked public service media tax and leaving advertising market by PSB at the same time. Until now, incomes from advertising market are approximately one third of all incomes of Latvian PSB, and the rest is coming directly from the state budget politically decided by the government.

Political decisions of government and parliament for above mentioned intent are still wanted. Also initiative of LTV and NEPLP for establishing of Russian language TV channel was not furthered by decision makers.