Text consolidated by Valsts valodas centrs (State Language Centre) with amending laws of:

17 April 1997 [shall come into force on 9 May 1997];

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22 May 2002 [shall come into force on 26 June 2002];

26 October 2005 [shall come into force on 25 November 2005];

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26 March 2009 [shall come into force on 22 April 2009];

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5 November 2020 [shall come into force on 18 November 2020].

If a whole or part of a section has been amended, the date of the amending law appears in square brackets at the end of the section. If a whole section, paragraph or clause has been deleted, the date of the deletion appears in square brackets beside the deleted section, paragraph or clause.

LAW OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

**On the Press and Other Mass Media**

**Chapter I**

**General Provisions**

**Section 1. Freedom of the Press**

The purpose of this Law is to protect the right to freedom of expression enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia.

Censorship of the press and other mass media is prohibited.

Monopolisation of the press and other mass media is prohibited.

[*15 June 2017*]

**Section 2. The Press and Other Mass Media**

In accordance with this Law, the press and other mass media (hereinafter – the mass media) shall be newspapers, magazines, newsletters and other periodicals (published at least once every three months, with a one-time print run exceeding 100 copies) and also electronic mass media, newsreels, information agency announcements, audiovisual recordings that are intended for public dissemination. A website may be registered as a mass medium.

The provisions of this Law shall not apply to instructions of State authorities and administrative bodies, laws and regulations, official bulletins of courts and arbitration practices, materials issued by educational and scientific institutions and information publications of local governments.

[*22 September 2011; 15 June 2017*]

**Section 3. Legal Status**

[22 September 2011]

**Section 4. Operation of the Mass Media**

The mass media shall gather, prepare and disseminate information in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Latvia.

Interference in the operation of mass media is prohibited.

Upon ensuring the realisation of the principle of the freedom of the press, the institutions, undertakings and organisations the economic activities of which are related to print runs of periodicals shall be prohibited from refusing to accept and fulfil printing orders based on political grounds.

**Section 5. Right to Receive Information**

The mass media have the right to receive information from the State and from public organisations.

**Section 6. Refusal to Provide Information**

Officials of State and public organisations may only refuse to provide information if it is not to be published in accordance with Section 7 of this Law.

**Section 7. Information not for Publication**

Information which is an official secret or other secret specially protected by law, promotes violence and the overthrow of the prevailing order, advocates war, cruelty, racial, national or religious superiority and intolerance, and incites to the commission of other crimes may not be published.

Materials from pre-trial investigations may not be published without the written permission of the prosecutor or the investigator. When reporting on legal proceedings, materials which violate the presumption of innocence may not be published. During open court hearings, journalists may make recordings by means of technical devices if these do not hinder the course of judicial procedures.

Content of correspondence, telephone calls and telegraph messages of persons may not be published without the consent of the addressee and the author or their heirs.

The use of mass media to interfere in the private life of persons is prohibited and shall be punished in accordance with the law.

Information that injures the honour and dignity of natural persons and legal persons or defames them may not be published.

Information regarding the health condition of persons may not be published without their consent.

Trade secrets and patent secrets may not be published without the consent of their owners.

The following may not be published without the consent of the persons and institutions referred to in the Law on the Protection of the Children’s Rights:

1) information which may form grounds for a threat to the interests (privacy, identity and reputation) of a child who has suffered from an illegal act;

2) an image of a child who has suffered from an illegal act;

3) information which allows to identify an offender or witness who is a minor.

It is prohibited to publish child pornography and materials demonstrating violence against a child.

It is prohibited to publish materials of erotic and pornographic nature if this violates the procedures laid down by laws and regulations governing circulation of materials of erotic and pornographic nature.

[*22 May 2002; 26 October 2005; 15 June 2006; 19 December 2013; 30 January 2014*]

**Chapter II**

**Founding Mass Media and Termination of their Operation**

**Section 8. Founding**

Legal and natural persons, and also partnerships, except for local governments and institutions thereof, have the right to found and publish mass media.

Relations between a founder, publisher and an editorial board shall be regulated by a contract.

[*22 September 2011; 5 November 2020*]

**Section 9. Registration**

The mass media shall be registered by the Enterprise Register of the Republic of Latvia (hereinafter – the Enterprise Register), and a State notary of the Enterprise Register shall make entries in the Register of Mass Media (hereinafter – the Register) on the basis of an application of a stakeholder, a court ruling or decision by another competent State authority (official). Entries in the Register shall be stored electronically, and they shall have the same legal effect as the decision to make an entry. If an entry in the Register does not correspond to the decision to make the entry, the decision shall prevail. A registration file of the mass medium shall be accompanied by documents on the basis of which entries have been made in the Register, and also other documents specified in the law.

The following information shall be entered in the Register:

1) the name of the mass medium written by using the Latvian or Latin characters. The name of the mass medium may also be indicated in the language in which it will be published, however, this name shall not be entered in the Register;

2) the language in which the mass medium will be published;

3) the registration number, name, address of the owner (founder) of the mass medium – legal person or partnership;

4) the given name, surname, personal identity number of the owner (founder) of the mass medium – natural person (if a person does not have a personal identity number – his or her date of birth, number and date of issue of the personal identification document, country and authority issuing the document);

5) the registration number, name, address of the publisher of the mass medium – legal person or partnership;

6) the given name, surname, personal identity number of the publisher of the mass medium – natural person (if a person does not have a personal identity number – his or her date of birth, number and date of issue of the personal identification document, country and authority issuing the document);

7) thematic content and tasks of the mass medium;

8) the territory or audience to which the major portion of the mass medium production is intended to be disseminated or broadcast;

9) the period for operation of the mass medium if it is being founded for a specific period of time or for the achievement of a specific objective;

10) any other information if so provided for by external legal acts;

11) the date of making an entry.

The decision to found and publish the relevant mass medium shall be submitted together with a registration application. If the founder, publisher or editorial board are different persons, a contract regulating the relationship between such persons shall be submitted. A State fee shall be paid for the registration of the mass medium and the registration of documents to be submitted, and the Cabinet shall determine the amount, payment procedures and relief thereof.

After registration of the mass medium and upon written request of the mass medium the Enterprise Register may issue a registration certificate for a charge. Upon entering the mass medium in the Register, an individual registration number shall be assigned thereto. The registration certificate of the mass medium shall indicate the name, the registration date, the place of registration, the registration number and the date of issue of the registration certificate of the relevant mass medium.

The right of the a founder (publisher) of the mass medium to commence operation shall be retained for one year from the day the registration decision enters into force.

For making an entry or registering documents (appending to a file), an application shall be submitted to the Register by indicating the following information according to the nature of the application:

1) in the application for registration – the information to be entered in the Register and referred to in Paragraph two, Clauses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of this Section;

2) in the application for changes in the Register of Mass Media – the information regarding the nature of changes and new information which is to be entered in the Register with regard to the mass medium;

3) in the application for the removal of the mass medium from the Register – the nature of the entry proposed.

[*17 April 1997; 26 October 2005; 26 March 2009; 22 September 2011; 30 January 2014; 15 June 2017*]

**Section 9.1 Registration of Changes in the Pre-registered Information**

In order to make an entry in the Register on changes in the pre-registered information, including registration of new information, an application for the registration of changes in the mass medium shall be submitted to the Enterprise Register and accompanied by the following:

1) a decision by the owner (founder) to approve the changes;

2) [30 January 2014];

3) the registration certificate if any amendments are required thereto.

In order to make an entry in the Register on the termination of operation of the mass medium, an application for the removal of the mass medium from the Register shall be submitted to the Enterprise Register and accompanied by the following:

1) a decision by the owner (founder) to terminate the operation of the mass medium;

2) [30 January 2014];

3) the registration certificate if it has been issued.

[*22 September 2011; 30 January 2014*]

**Section 10. Decision to Make an Entry, Suspend Making of an Entry or Refuse to Make an Entry**

When examining an application, a State notary of the Enterprise Register shall ascertain that:

1) all documents have been submitted;

2) the documents submitted correspond to the requirements of external laws and regulations;

3) no other legal obstacle has been registered in the Register.

If during verification of the abovementioned circumstances no obstacles are found, the State notary of the Enterprise Register shall take the decision to make an entry in the Register.

If all the necessary documents have not been submitted or the documents submitted do not correspond to the requirements of external laws and regulations but such discrepancies can be eliminated, the State notary of the Enterprise Register shall take the decision to suspend making of an entry and specify a period for the elimination of discrepancies.

If the name of the mass medium proposed coincides with the name of the mass medium entered in the Register, the State notary of the Enterprise Register is entitled to take the decision to suspend making of an entry.

If the discrepancies found in documents cannot be eliminated or the information submitted may not be entered in the Register, the State notary of the Enterprise Register shall take the decision to refuse to make an entry. In such cases the State fee shall not be reimbursed.

[*22 September 2011*]

**Section 10.1 Entry into Effect, Notification, Contestation and Appeal of a Registration Decision**

The decision to make an entry, suspend making of an entry or refuse to make an entry shall enter into effect after signature thereof, unless the decision provides for a later date of entry into effect or entry into effect thereof depends on the entry into effect of another decision. In this case, a relevant note thereon shall be made in entries of the Register.

The decision to make an entry, suspend making of an entry or refuse to make an entry shall be taken within 10 days from the day of receipt of an application. The Enterprise Register shall send the decision to the applicant within three days (excluding public holidays and non-working days) from the day the decision is taken.

Contestation or appeal of the decision to make an entry, suspend making of an entry or refuse to make an entry shall not suspend operation thereof.

[*22 September 2011*]

**Section 10.2 Disclosure Obligation**

Founders and owners of mass media that are capital companies shall be obliged to inform the Commercial Register Office of their beneficial owners in the cases and in accordance with the procedures laid down in the Commercial Law.

[*22 September 2011*]

**Section 11. Termination of Operation**

Operation of the mass medium shall be terminated:

1) if its founder or publisher and editorial board terminate the operation of the mass medium in cases provided for by law or contract;

2) if the mass medium has not been published within one year after entry into effect of a registration decision thereof;

3) if a court has taken a ruling on the termination of the operation of the mass medium.

If the operation of the mass medium is terminated in cases referred to in Paragraph one, Clauses 1 and 3 of this Section, the head of the mass medium or the court shall within three days after termination of the operation notify the Enterprise Register thereof and submit the decision to terminate operation of the mass medium. A notification on the termination of the operation of the mass medium shall be sent to the National Library of Latvia.

[*17 April 1997; 26 October 2005; 30 January 2014; 5 November 2020*]

**Section 12. Termination of Operation by a Court Ruling**

The Prosecutor General of the Republic of Latvia, the Chief State Notary of the Enterprise Register and the Minister for Finance have the right to initiate a court examination of the termination of operation of the mass medium.

A court may make a ruling on the termination of operation of the mass medium if it:

1) has published an invitation to use violent or any other unlawful methods;

2) has published an invitation not to comply with the laws of the Republic of Latvia;

3) has not paid the taxes provided for by the laws of the Republic of Latvia within the time limit and to the extent specified and does not submit to an audit by the State financial institutions;

4) has published information which has been found by a court judgement in a criminal case to be slanderous and defamatory, disclosure of an official secret, war propaganda, violation of racial and national equality and child pornography;

5) within a one-year period has repeatedly committed other violations of the provisions of this Law.

[*17 April 1997; 26 October 2005*]

**Section 13. Control of the Termination of Operation**

If the operation of the mass medium is terminated by a court ruling, the Enterprise Register may appoint authorised persons who shall be assigned to enforce the ruling.

[*17 April 1997*]

**Chapter III**

**Organising the Operation of Mass Media**

**Section 14. Production and Financial Operation**

The production and financial operation of mass media shall be regulated by the laws of the Republic of Latvia and other legal acts.

[*26 October 2005*]

**Section 15. Relations Between the Founder or Publisher and the Editorial Board of the Mass Medium**

Relations between the founder or publisher and the editorial board of the mass medium, as well as relations with other legal persons and natural persons shall be regulated by the laws of the Republic of Latvia, civil contracts and employment contracts.

Civil contracts shall determine:

1) the obligation of the editorial board to publish materials of the founder or publisher;

2) the financing of the operation of the editorial board;

3) the distribution of income (profit) obtained through the mass medium;

4) the mutual obligations of the founder or publisher and editorial board to ensure appropriate production, social and community (working) conditions for editorial staff;

5) other civil legal relations between the founder or publisher and editorial board.

**Section 16. Editor (Editor-in-chief) of the Mass Medium**

The editor (editor-in-chief) shall be responsible for the work of the editorial board of the mass medium and its other departments in accordance with his or her competence, which is determined by this Law, other legal acts, as well as contracts entered into with the founder or publisher.

The editor (editor-in-chief) shall manage the work of the editorial board of the mass medium, represent it in relations with the founder, publisher and other legal persons and natural persons.

The editor (editor-in-chief) shall be responsible for the content of the materials to be published in the mass medium.

The editor (editor-in-chief) shall be editorially independent in fulfilling his or her duties.

[*22 September 2011*]

**Section 17. Respect for Copyright**

When using the materials to be published and broadcast, the mass medium must comply with the laws of the Republic of Latvia and international copyright norms.

**Section 18. Issue Data**

Each press run shall include the following information:

1) name of the publication, and for serial publications – name of the series, sub-series and serial number;

2) place and year of publication;

3) information concerning a reprint (for non-periodical publications),

4) publisher (institution, organisation, registration number of an organisation, given name, surname of a person);

5) editor (name, surname), editorial board and its address;

6) the printing-house, its address, the order number, printing type (technique);

7) size of the publication print run, the price, the quantity (printed sheet statistics) of the publication;

8) registration number in the Register.

[*15 June 2006; 30 January 2014*]

**Section 19. Mandatory Copies**

Mandatory copies of publications shall be sent to institutions and organisations in accordance with the procedures laid down in the law.

[*26 October 2005*]

**Section 20. Retention of Published Information Materials**

Editorial boards of mass media have the obligation to retain relevant manuscripts, documents created during the process of preparation and transmission of television and radio broadcasts for three years after the date of dissemination of the information or data.

**Section 21. Retraction of False Information and Apology**

Natural or legal persons are entitled to request the mass media to retract information published (broadcast) about them if it is not true. In other cases of injury to honour and dignity they have the right to demand an apology.

An application for the retraction of false information or apology shall be submitted to the editor of the mass medium within six months from the day of publication (broadcasting) of the false information or information injuring honour and dignity.

The application shall precisely indicate the information which is not true or information injuring honour and dignity, the place (broadcast) and date of publication thereof.

The editor of the mass medium is obliged to examine the submission within seven days of its receipt.

If the mass medium has no evidence that the published (broadcast) information is true, it shall retract such without delay. A retraction or apology shall be published in the same font, in the same section of the publication (broadcast) in which the false information or information injuring honour and dignity was published (broadcast). In the event of a dispute, the injured party – a natural or legal person – may request the retraction of such information or apology through court.

If an obligation to retract false information or apologise has been imposed on the mass medium by a court ruling, it shall be done in accordance with the provisions of this Section.

The mass medium may refuse to retract the disseminated information if the facts contained therein are confirmed by a court judgement.

Provisions of this Section for the retraction of false information and apology shall be applicable to electronic mass media insofar as the Electronic Mass Media Law does not govern the relevant issues otherwise.

[*26 October 2005; 22 September 2011*]

**Section 22. Confidentiality of Sources**

The mass medium may choose not to indicate the source of information. If the person who has provided the information requests that his or her name is not to be indicated in the mass medium, this request shall be binding upon the editorial board.

In order to protect the substantial interests of a person or the public, only a court may order the disclosure of the source of information while observing proportionality.

[*13 December 2001*]

**Chapter IV**

**Journalists, their Rights and Obligations**

**Section 23. Journalists**

Under this Law, a journalist is a person who gathers, compiles, edits or in some other way prepares materials for the mass medium and who has entered into an employment contract or performs such work upon the instruction of the mass medium, or is a member of a journalists’ association.

**Section 24. Rights of Journalists**

A journalist has the right to:

1) gather information by any method not prohibited by law and from any source of information not prohibited by law;

2) disseminate information, except that which is not to be disseminated in accordance with Section 7 of this Law;

3) be present at socially significant events and, when informing from them, also use official communication channels;

4) refuse to prepare and publish material if it conflicts with his or her views;

5) delete his or her signature from material prior to publication if its content has been distorted as a result of editing.

When exercising the rights referred to in this Section, journalists, where necessary, shall produce a certificate of membership in the Journalists’ Union or of employment with the mass medium, or an authorisation granted by such.

**Section 25. Duties of Journalists**

A journalist has the duty to:

1) provide true information;

2) when publishing a statement for the first time, according to the wishes of the person providing the information, indicate its author;

3) inform the editor that the submitted material concerns official or other secrets protected by law;

4) refuse to perform tasks the performance of which involves violation of the law;

5) respect the rights and lawful interests of the State, public organisations, companies (undertakings) and persons.

[*15 June 2006*]

**Section 26. Accreditation**

Mass media of the Republic of Latvia or foreign mass media may, upon coordination with the relevant institution (hereinafter – the accrediting authority), accredit their journalists and other representatives in this institution.

Accreditation shall ensure access to the premises of the accrediting authority, the right to participate in open meetings, sessions and other events organised by the accrediting authority, and also receive transcripts, minutes and other documents.

The Cabinet shall determine the types of accreditation and the periods for which accreditation is granted, and also the procedures for accreditation and cases when accreditation may be refused, suspended or withdrawn.

If an institution refuses, suspends or withdraws the accreditation, a decision regarding it may be contested and appealed in accordance with the procedures laid down in the Administrative Procedure Law. The contesting or appeal of a decision shall not suspend its operation.

[*15 June 2006; 15 June 2017*]

**Chapter V**

**Liability for Violations of this Law**

**Section 27. Basis for Liability**

For violation of the prohibitions and restrictions specified in this Law as well as for failure to comply with obligations or for administrative offences, persons at fault shall be liable in accordance with the procedures laid down in the laws of the Republic of Latvia.

[*9 January 2020 /* *Section shall come into force on 1 July 2020.* *See Paragraph 2 of Transitional Provisions*]

**Section 28. Compensation for Injury**

Injury, also moral injury, caused by the mass medium to a natural or legal person by providing false information, defamation and injuring the honour and dignity of a person by publishing data and information the publication of which is prohibited by law, the mass medium shall provide compensation to such person in accordance with the procedures prescribed by law.

**Section 29. Release from Liability**

Mass media shall not be held liable for the dissemination of false information, if it contains:

1) official documents of the State authorities and administrative bodies, announcements by political and public organisations;

2) [15 June 2017],

3) publications by officials.

[*15 June 2017*]

**Chapter VI**

**International Cooperation in the Field of Mass Information**

**Section 30. International Treaties and Agreements**

International cooperation of mass media shall be regulated by treaties and agreements entered into by the highest State authorities and administrative bodies of the Republic, mass media, professional organisations of journalists or other creative unions in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Latvia and norms of international law.

**Chapter VII**

**Administrative Offences in the Field of the Press and Other Mass Media and Competence in Administrative Offence Proceedings**

[*9 January 2020 /* *Section shall come into force on 1 July 2020.* *See Paragraph 2 of Transitional Provisions*]

**Section 31. Disclosure of Confidential Sources of Information**

For disclosing a source of information in the mass medium if the mass medium has undertaken not to disclose it, a warning or a fine of up to two hundred units of fine shall be applied to a natural or legal person.

[*9 January 2020 /* *Section shall come into force on 1 July 2020.* *See Paragraph 2 of Transitional Provisions*]

**Section 32. Interference with the Performance of the Duties of a Journalist**

For creating circumstances which interfere with or completely prevent a journalist from the performance of the duties of a journalist provided for by this Law, a warning or a fine of up to two hundred units of fine shall be imposed on a natural or legal person.

[*9 January 2020 /* *Section shall come into force on 1 July 2020.* *See Paragraph 2 of Transitional Provisions*]

**Section 33. Competence in Administrative Offence Proceedings**

The administrative offence proceedings for the offences referred to in Sections 31 and 32 of this Law shall be conducted by the State Police but where the respective offences are committed by an electronic mass media – also by the National Electronic Mass Media Council.

[*9 January 2020 /* *Section shall come into force on 1 July 2020.* *See Paragraph 2 of Transitional Provisions*]

**Transitional Provisions**

[*15 June 2006; 9 January 2020*]

1. The Cabinet shall issue the regulations referred to in Section 26, Paragraph three of this Law by 30 September 2006.

[*9 January 2020*]

2. The amendment to this Law regarding the new wording of Section 27 and Chapter VII shall come into force concurrently with the Law on Administrative Liability.

[*9 January 2020*]

3. Local governments and institutions thereof shall, by 31 December 2020, submit an application to the Enterprise Register for the removal of the mass medium in their ownership from the Register. In such cases the State fee shall not be paid. If the notification of the owner of the mass medium on its removal from the Register has not been received within the abovementioned time limit, a State notary of the Enterprise Register shall make amendments to the Register and remove such mass media from the Register by 31 December 2021.

[*5 November 2020*]

**Informative Reference to European Union Directives**

[*19 December 2013*]

This Law contains legal norms arising from Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA.

Chairperson of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia A. Gorbunovs

Secretary of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia I. Daudišs

Riga, 20 December 1990