

## AEJ in campaign against Polish public broadcasting law

From the AEJ's Media Freedom Representative William Horsley  
to AEJ national sections, contacts and Press Freedom Network

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As part of our ongoing activities in defence of press and media freedom, the AEJ has publicly expressed strong opposition to the new Public Service Media Law in Poland, which removes long-standing guarantees of independence. The legislation was rushed through the Polish parliament during the Christmas period despite fierce criticism within Poland and internationally, including from the European Parliament and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. As of now (Tuesday morning), Poland's President Duda has not signed the legislation into law; he has been strongly urged by many, including European Parliament leaders, not to do so.

The AEJ's [Open Letter](#) to the Polish ministers concerned was signed by AEJ President Otmar Lahodynsky, Vice-President and MF Representative William Horsley, and Krzysztof Bobinski, AEJ Poland. It was delivered by hand in Warsaw and published online on 29 December and widely reported in international media.

Opposition to the law has drawn adverse comment from media organisations and has been covered in the press. Further developments will be recorded on the AEJ [website](#), the Council of Europe [Platform](#) etc.

### Links and reports

[AEJ Open Letter](#) asking Polish ministers to shelve "hasty" plans for government control over public broadcasting. 29 December 2015

[Alert on the Council of Europe Platform on Safety of Journalists](#), *Polish Law on Public Service Broadcasting Removes Guarantees of Independence*. AEJ, Article 19, CPJ, EFJ, IFJ, Index on Censorship, RSF. 4 January 2016

[EBU press release](#), *EBU appeals to Polish president to reject controversial media bill*. European Broadcasting Union. 31 December 2015

[EBU press release](#), *Press freedom and media organisations issue statement opposing abolition of essential safeguards for public service media pluralism and independence in Poland*. 30 December 2015

[EBU letter to Polish Parliament](#). 29 December 2015

[EBU press release](#), *EBU urges Polish government to ensure independence of public broadcasting system*. 18 December 2015

[IPI press release](#), *IPI urges Polish president to reject new media law*. International Press Institute. 5 January 2016

[EFJ press release](#), *Polish media reform to exert more control on public service broadcaster*. European Federation of Journalists. 15 December 2015

Media coverage: [BBC](#) [EUObserver](#) [EurActiv](#) [Prague Post](#)

## **Council of Europe press information about the Platform on Safety of Journalists**

*4 January 2016:* Four media freedom organisations – the Association of European Journalists ([AEJ](#)), the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) – have [alerted](#) the Council of Europe on the threat to the media freedom posed by the draft Polish law on public service broadcasting alleging it removes guarantees of independence.

These organisations have published a complaint on the Council of Europe Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and the Safety of Journalists ([LINK](#)) in which they allege that the draft law on public service media governance being debated in the Polish parliament proposes the removal of guarantees for the independence of public service TV (TVP) and Radio (PR), in breach of Council of Europe norms and of the mandate given by the Polish constitution to the independent broadcasting authority (KRRiT) to uphold the broad public interest in broadcasting.

According to the information contained in the alert, the proposed legislation gives a government minister exclusive powers to appoint and dismiss all members of the supervisory and management boards of TVP and PR, making them wholly dependent on the goodwill and favour of the government.

The organisations point out that the Polish government's plans directly contradict the commitments made by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in its [2012 Declaration on Public Service Media Governance](#), in which it called on member states to strengthen editorial and operational independence of public broadcasters and other public service media.

The organisations submitting this alert call on the Polish ruling party to abandon the proposed legislation at once.

## **Background information on the Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and the Safety of Journalists**

The Council of Europe launched the platform in April 2015 aiming to protect journalism and to promote the safety of journalists in Europe.

Seven partner organisations contribute to the platform: Article 19, the Association of European Journalists, the European Federation of Journalists, the International Federation of Journalists, Reporters Without Borders, Index on Censorship and the Committee to Protect Journalists.

The platform allows these partners to issue alerts concerning media freedom threats and to bring them to the attention of the Council of Europe institutions. Once the alerts are published, the Council of Europe sends them to the authorities of the country concerned.

The Council of Europe institutions may react publicly or start a dialogue on the issue with the authorities. Subsequently, responses of the member states and follow-up action taken by the competent bodies are also posted on the platform.

So far, the platform has recorded 106 alerts concerning 25 states. States have replied to 52 of them.