

President of Latvia submits changes to the Law on Financing of Political Organisations (Parties) to the Saeima

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Based on Article 65 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (Satversme), President of Latvia Egils Levits has drafted and on 20 January 2022 submitted proposed changes to the Law on Financing of Political Organisations (Parties) to the parliament (Saeima).

'I propose to make changes in the Law on Financing of Political Organisations (Parties) allowing Saeima to request Corruption Combating and Prevention Bureau (KNAB) to consider partial reduction of public funding to a political party if its parliamentary group dissolves or it loses more than 2/3 of its parliamentary group members,' says the letter accompanying President's bill.

Public funding increase to political parties, together with considerably less dependence on private donors, was a welcome step by the Saeima, which will strengthen national democracy of Latvia in a long run (see changes to the Law on Financing of Political Organisations (Parties) adopted on 14 November 2019). It was a necessary political step that was long overdue. It filled one of key gaps (deficits) in our democratic framework. Adequate public funding to political parties will reduce their dependence on private donations and vested interest. Parties receiving insufficient public funding and likely to lean towards private donors and their vested interest will cost too much for the state and taxpayers in the long run, President Levits stresses.

According to President, when the bill was debated by the parliament, he already warned Cabinet and Saeima that a very close monitoring of the application of the Law is necessary and the likelihood of additional fine-tuning is high to avoid the apparent inconsistencies. Egils Levits has called for different levels of public funding on a number of occasions. Parties would be required to fulfil specific criteria to access a certain level of funding, and thus would be much more motivated to make the best of their parliamentary mandate and activities targeting constituencies between elections. President of Latvia is convinced that these issues will have to be revisited at some point in future. He also believes that adequate public funding to parties was the right way

forward.

President's letter accompanying the bill also indicates that Egils Levits has been closely following the application of the Law on Financing of Political Organisations (Parties) and has discussed party-financing rules with responsible authorities, political party leaderships and political party funding experts on regular basis. It has become apparent through these discussions that one of the key issues is continued public funding to political parties that have lost significant number of their parliamentary group members, rendering the party in question incapable of delivering on its promises to voters and unable to ensure the best representation of their interests. 'We can achieve the desired effect by introducing minor changes to the Law. I urge Saeima to adopt the changes proposed by me in this bill before the next elections, so that they can come to force as the next parliamentary term begins and 14th convocation is formed,' Egils Levits underlines.

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