

PRESS RELEASE

Hungarian Media Law fuels international concern

Brussels and Paris, 13th December 2010 - The European Newspaper Publishers' Association (ENPA) and the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), expressed concern at a draft law that would impose extensive fines against journalists and publishers if they refuse to disclose their sources or publish information deemed inappropriate by the government.

The proposed law, if passed, would seriously endanger freedom of the press by creating room for a subjective judgment about any individual news story and penalise publishers and editors through government-controlled regulatory bodies. The proposal could dramatically limit objective news media.

"We are deeply concerned that this law poses a serious threat to freedom of the press and would, in particular, have a significant negative impact on investigative journalism," ENPA and WAN-IFRA said in a letter to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

The international press organisations called on the government to urgently revise the current package of draft legislation to ensure that it serves its proper function of enhancing Hungarian democracy. "The fact that a government controlled body will supervise what is allowed and what is not allowed in the press is a major step back and is contrary to democratic principles such as freedom of press as well as universal human rights," the press organisations said in a statement. **"The harm will be enormous both to the quality of journalism and the range and independence of information."**

"The proposed law would, in particular, have a significant negative impact on investigative journalism, editorial independence and articles based on information provided by whistleblowers. We trust that the Hungarian government will reconsider this legislation and ensure the full functioning of democracy and rule of law in Hungary," ENPA and WAN-IFRA stated in their letter to Prime Minister.

In annex: ENPA and WAN-IFRA letter to Prime Minister of Hungary, Mr Viktor Orbán

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ENPA, based in Brussels, represents over 5,200 national, regional and local newspaper titles, published in 23 European Member States, plus Norway and Switzerland. More than 150 million newspapers are sold and read by over 300 million Europeans every day, in addition to the millions of unique daily visits to online newspapers websites.

WAN-IFRA is the global organization for the world's newspapers and news publishers, with formal representative status at the United Nations, UNESCO and the Council of Europe. The organization groups 18,000 publications, 15,000 online sites and over 3,000 companies in more than 120 countries.

Mr. Viktor Orbán
Prime Minister of the Hungarian Republic
Budapest, Hungary

13th December, 2010

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to you on behalf of the European Newspaper Publishers' Association (ENPA), and the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), to express our concern at a draft law that could expose journalists and publishers to extensive fines should they refuse to disclose their sources, or for publishing content that is judged inappropriate by the state regulatory body, NMHH's Médiatanács (Media Council of the Hungarian Media Regulatory Office).

The law, if passed, would enable Médiatanács to impose fines on newspaper editors and their publishers who are convicted in libel cases. Furthermore, it can suspend or cancel the license of a media service provider in cases of repeated infringements.

We fear that the law could be misused and could inflict financial damage on newspapers based on subjective approaches to individual issues.

In addition, we are deeply concerned that this law poses a serious threat to freedom of the press and would, in particular, have a significant negative impact on investigative journalism. The right to confidentiality, protected by laws in many nations and international conventions, recognises that without a strong guarantee of anonymity, many people would be deterred from coming forward and sharing information of public interests with journalists.

We respectfully remind you that Hungary has a world-wide reputation for liberty and for freedom of press, as seen particularly during the 1848 and 1956 revolutions and in the recent decades leading to its entrance into the European Union. On behalf of our press organisations, we would therefore call on you to urgently revise the current package of draft legislation to ensure Hungary maintains this reputation and the draft law serves its proper function of enhancing Hungarian democracy.

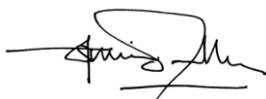
We respectfully call on you to ensure that these concerns are adequately addressed, and ask you to assess the effects of the proposed draft law on the fundamental freedoms in Hungarian society.

Thank you for considering our concerns.

Yours sincerely,



Ivar Rusdal
President of the European Newspaper Publishers Association (ENPA)



Gavin O'Reilly
President of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)