

Journalism in the Shadows: the Challenge for Press Freedom in Romania

Report of EFJ Mission 3-4 February 2011



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Introduction:

On 3-4 February 2011, the European Federation of Journalists carried out a mission to Romania following an invitation by its affiliate, the Romania Federation of Journalists MediaSind.

While Europe's attention is focused on precise issues such as the Media Law in Hungary or the conflict of interest of Italian's Prime Minister, the situation of journalists in Romania remains problematic in many ways, not least from a crisis of undue political influence and the evidence of the regular and serious attacks on journalists and their media by political groups.

Over the two days, the mission met journalists' leaders, policymakers, and heads of the country's state funded radio and television networks and news agency and held a consultation with 50 journalists and media activists at a round-table which was widely reported in media.

The mission supported the union MediaSind which has recently successfully negotiated a new collective agreement for journalists but which is also fighting attempts at government level to challenge the independence of the press and to suppress workers bargaining rights across all sectors of the economy.

*Members of the mission were EFJ/IFJ General Secretary **Aidan White**, EFJ Co-director **Marc Gruber** and the President of the Journalists' Union of Macedonia and Thrace, **Moshos Voitsidis**.*

This report sums-up the main concerns and findings of the mission and identifies a series of recommendations.

JOURNALISTS AND THE LAW: FROM BAD TO WORSE?

Romanian Defence Policy Targets Media

The EFJ mission heard that the Romanian Superior Defence Council adopted on 23 June 2010 a national defence strategy which included a provision stating that the mass/media is a “vulnerability” to the National Security:

“The phenomenon of orchestrated media campaigns in order to denigrate the state institutions by spreading false information about their work, the pressures put by media trusts on political decision-making in order to gain benefits of an economic nature or currying favor with state institutions is a (...) vulnerability of the Romanian state”.

The inclusion of such an assertion in an official document provoked strong reactions from journalists and press freedom groups who described it as an attack on press freedom and contrary to standards of policy in this area in European Union countries as well as among members of NATO.

→ *The mission raised this issue during a meeting with members of the Culture Committee of the Senate on 3 February. The European Parliament had earlier reopened the Petition filed against Romania by the Romanian Federation of Journalists MediaSind, CSDR and supported by EFJ.*

This document is in our view an explicit breach by a Member State of the European Union of the following fundamental rights set out below.

- **Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union:**
“Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. The freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected.”
- **Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights:**
“Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without

interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises”.

Thus, in accordance with Article 52 paragraph 3 of the Charter, this right has the same meaning and scope as those laid down by the ECHR. Limitations which may be made to this right cannot therefore exceed those provided for in Article 10 (2). Consequently:

- **“Handyside” Case-law (December 7, 1976,/49) of European Court of Human Rights**

The European Court of Human Rights has recognized that freedom of expression enshrined in Article 10 of the ECHR is one of fundamental rights in a democratic society based on pluralism, tolerance and openness. The Court stated that freedom of expression does not concern only information and ideas that are considered favorably received or regarded as inoffensive or indifferent, but even those that scandalize, shock or disturb the State or any part of the population.”

- **Article 6 of the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union**

“1. The Union recognizes the rights, freedoms and principles set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 7 December 2000, as adapted at Strasbourg, on 12 December 2007, which shall have the same legal value as the Treaties.

Threats to Press Freedom: Journalist’s Law (Ghișe) and Press Law (Prigoană)

The Romanian Parliament recently filed two draft Bills on mass media which affect freedom of expression. The Journalist’s Law presented by deputy Ioan Ghișe asks that journalists should be professionally certificated every three years and psychologically tested every year.

A second draft law, proposed by Mr. Prigoană, would radically expand the scope and status of the National Audiovisual Council creating a Press Ministry for on line and print media, in line with proposals recently adopted in Hungary.

→ *The EFJ Mission expressed strong reservations and opposition to these legal instruments. They are both dangerous and have a potentially damaging effect on press freedom by emphasizing the use of legal instruments for the redress of personal grievances against the press, they deny the principle of self-regulation in dealing with media content and they undermine the professionalism of journalists and information workers.*

Politicisation of media and underfunding of public broadcasters

For more than 22 years, since the collapse of the dictatorship of Nicolai Ceausescu, all public media institutions – National Television and the National Broadcasting Company – have come under undue political influence and control. The structures for regulation and management of these media are not dissimilar to the models used during the era of communism.

Not a single change in the legal framework in these years has solved the problem of continuing political interference in public media.

Moreover, public media institutions are underfinanced and the financing procedure is arbitrary and depends on political sympathies.

Romania has the lowest licence fee or media fee charge in the European Union with a *per capita* levy of less than 1.5€ a month for both radio and television).

Further problems are experienced at the National Press Agency Agerpres which is overseen by the Parliament. Salaries are decided and paid by the Ministry of Finance. Those salaries are the lowest paid within the entire media industry in Romania. A starting level salary for a junior reporter is as low as 100 € a month.

→ *The EFJ Mission met with leaders of public broadcasters and with the public press agency Agerpres. The EFJ mission discussed with them their concerns over drastic underfunding of public service media and the need to improve the status of journalists as independent professionals. (In the case of Agerpres, journalists are designated as civil servants.)*

“It is better to keep the current regulations rather than risking a new law which could be even worse” is a sentiment told several times to the EFJ mission.

The EFJ mission concluded that what journalists, politicians and the public need is not necessarily a new law, but more flexible, transparent and fairer media policy. Political interference and the need for ethical standards cannot be addressed by law alone, they form part of a broader range of problems within a political culture which is flawed and which still needs to develop a democratic, tolerant and pluralist character in Romania.

Draft law to abolish bargaining rights in media sector

A new law project promoted by the Labor Ministry simply attempts to erase the media sector from the new Labor Legislation and would at a stroke remove mass media from the industrial relations scene. The new rules would make impossible the bargaining of the Collective Labor Agreements that regulates the media activity in Romania.

In these circumstances journalists would not have any Labour protection against any abusive work contracts.

→ *The EFJ Mission met with the leadership of the journalists’ union MediaSind as well as with representatives of its branches in radio, television, press and press agency. It also met with the leader of the Democratic Trade Union Federation of Romania.*

Although MediaSind has successfully negotiated the renewal of the collective agreement for journalists that includes a conscience clause as well as company-level agreements in Agerpres and Realitatea, the intention to abolish collective agreements threatens then fundamental labour rights of journalists and media staff and must be challenged.

PROFESSIONALISM AND ETHICS: SELF-REGULATION FIRST

Failure to respect Collective Work Agreement, the Ethics Code and the Conscience Clause

Despite the existence of a collective agreement, employers do not always respect these standards. The RFJ MediaSind have won several lawsuits against employers who did not respect journalists' rights provided by the media sector collective agreement, including the wage levels, the ethics code and the conscience clause. A Parity Commission¹ established between trade unions and employers' organisations is supposed to enforce the Collective Agreement its decisions are mandatory. However the mechanism is not working in a satisfactory manner.

Journalists face difficulties in obtaining justice because of the long length of legal procedures (sometimes taking several years). This means prolonged endurance of difficult working conditions. The governmental bodies in charge of enforcing labour laws and collective agreements lack the capacity and resources to apply them. This acts as a disincentive to take up

¹ *The Parity Commission represents, according to the Collective Agreements' Law, a sort of Council of Administration at Sector / Organisation Level. The members of the Parity Commission are the representatives of the trade unions and employers' organisations, subscribing to the collective agreement. The main responsibility of The Parity Commission is to fix all the developing issued raised from the application of the Sector Collective Agreement. The Parity Commission's decisions are mandatory for all the employers and employees of that particular Sector. According to the Organisational Norms, the Parity Commission can verify, in any institution, if the Sector Collective Agreement is respected. These institutions are obliged to apply the decisions taken by the Parity Commission. For example, if an employer does not respect the Decision of the Parity Commission, the employee can follow the legal procedure against the employer. The Court may consider as strong point in his advantage the Parity Commission's decision.*

complaints and as a result many journalists do not consider using such procedures as a viable option.

→ *The EFJ mission found out that many employers by-pass collective agreements or apply simply the minimum salary by compensating workers with so-called “copyright” fees. That is, by paying only a symbolic wage and then topping it up with fees upon publication of material. These fees do not incur social charges for the employer and are not counted as income for pension or other social welfare benefits. This practice is widespread and seems to be encouraged by the authorities. The EFJ considers that it is dangerous and unfair because it deprives workers from adequate social protection and future pension rights. It also sets a negative precedent which could be copied in other countries of the region.*

The EFJ Mission met with the President of the Democratic Trade Union Federation of Romania and together with MediaSind they agreed that the defence of the collective agreement for the media sector was a key priority for the coming months.

In addition to the purely regulatory framework, it is the role of the unions and the duty of the government to make sure that existing collective agreements, either sectorial or company-based, are fully respected and enforced.

The Activities of the “Field Committee” are Blocked

According to the Romanian Law, the state must finance “field committees”, including in media, in order to improve the skills, capacity and competence of professional workers. Basically, this body must certify the journalistic standards and develop new activity fields inside media industry.

However the activities of the Field Committee for media are currently blocked because of severe underfunding and lack of human resources. This prevents journalists from being certified according to their skills, and by

consequence it also prevents mobility inside and outside Romania according to their certified qualifications.

Self-regulation among journalists, bloggers and media employers

Many politicians have sponsored a Press Law concerning content whereas media professionals seek forms of accountability under rules established by self-regulation.

→ A major concern identified by the EFJ mission is the lack of independent, well established and recognized mechanism of self-regulation in media. In particular in public media, the current systems of administration and management fail to create the conditions for politically independent media governing bodies on one hand, and fail to create the conditions for journalists to operate in an ethical and independent environment at the other hand.

There is an urgent need to promote a debate about the importance of a new approach to media accountability that underpins the principle of self-rule but which reinforces the value of mediate of disputes over content, which promotes education and awareness raising on the value of ethical and independent journalism and which advocates the highest levels of legal protection for free expression.

Media literacy

Like in many other countries, media literacy is either not sufficient or not adapted to the profound changes in journalism and in media in general.

THE MEDIA BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT: INNOVATION IS NEEDED

The lack of actions in reviving and strengthening the media industry

Romania has the one of the highest VAT rate from the EU on media industry activity. Whereas the VAT in the EU is between 0-5%, in Romania it is 24% for media production and 9% for the distribution activity. The Romanian media received no subventions during the international economic crisis, while other European countries granted substantial support to local or national media. More than 6000 journalists have been fired in the past years and hundreds of publications closed their doors; despite this difficult situation we noticed the lack of any kind of reaction from the authorities to support the Romania media.

RODIPET's situation

The main press distribution chain is bankrupted and a criminal investigation is ongoing. Meantime, the print media has no efficient alternative to sell the newspapers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Journalists and the Law:

1. Exclusion from the Romanian National Defense Strategy of the provision regarding media;
2. Rejection of draft laws on media; admonition of the initiators of laws conflicting with the political commitments of their parties. Authorities and political parties should publicly reaffirm the support for press freedom as fundamental principle of democracy.
3. Amendments of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Society, Romanian Television Society and National Press Agency Agerpres' Law, to exclude politics from the governing bodies, to professionalise the Administrative Councils and to appoint professionals in these areas through a transparent mechanism agreed with civil society.
4. Urgent modification of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Society, Romanian Television Society and National Press Agency Agerpres' Law in order to upgrade the license fee to an appropriate level of financing, in consultation with trade unions and professional organisations. Modify the financing system of the National Press Agency Agerpres in order to make it a genuine media institution as opposed to a public service.
5. Rejection of the proposals to amend the Labor's Law, Trade Unions' Law, Employers' Law, collective bargaining contracts, labor disputes that could lead to the abolition of "media sector" as an entity recognized in the social dialogue, including by appealing the Constitutional Court or the European institutions.

Professionalism and Ethics

1. Strengthen and developing the role of the Parity Commission on collective agreement at sectorial level
2. Create Labour Courts to enforce existing laws and agreements.
3. Address the issue of payment of journalists in copyright instead of genuine wages
4. Respect and apply the Romanian Law on Field Committees

5. Promote the Professional Ethics Code
6. Promote a debate about the importance of a new approach to media accountability and ethics and to create and enforce a genuine Ethics Council involving media professionals and civil society groups, but not representatives of the state or political institutions.
7. Develop media literacy and promote media skills in schools and universities, as well as in life-long training programmes for adults

The Media Business Environment

1. Grant similar VAT charges as in other EU countries
 2. Develop, in partnership between authorities, employers and workers, models of public support to media at local or national level
 3. Official involvement in saving and reopening of the major press distribution society RODIPET
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ANNEX I – Programme of the Mission

Thursday, FEBRUARY 3th

10.30 -12.00 – meeting with MediaSind board

12.00 - 13.00 – meeting with National Press Agency leadership

15.00 -16.00 –Romanian Radio Broadcasting Society visit

16.00 –16.30 - meeting with The Romanian Democratic Trade Union Confederation leadership

17.00 –Romanian Parliament meeting

Friday, FEBRUARY 4th

10.00 - 11.30 – round-table debates

12.00 – 13.30 – conclusions

13.30 – 14.00 - press interviews

15.30 – 17.00 – Romanian Television Society visit

17.00 – departure to Târgoviște, Romanian former capital and birthplace of Ion Heliade Rădulescu, the founder of the first Romanian newspaper

18.00 – 18.30 – telecast at the Press Trust ARTPRESS

18.30 – 19.30 – Press Trust ARTPRESS visit; discussion with local media representatives and Romanian Employers Press ROMEDIA leadership

ANNEX II – List of people met by the mission and list of people attending the round table

The EFJ Mission held separate meetings with:

1. Sergiu Nicolaescu, President of The Culture Commission of the Senate
2. Aledin Amed, Vice-President of the Culture Commission of the Deputy Chamber
3. Gheorghe Bârlea, deputy of the Democrat-Liberal Party
4. Avram Crăciun, senator of the Social-Democrat Party
5. Florin Davidescu, Senate Culture Commission's counsellor
6. Ioan Mihai Roșca, Chairman of the National Press Agency AGERPRES
7. Argentina Traicu, Vice-Director of the National Press Agency AGERPRES (NPA AGERPRES)
8. Elena Murar, Financial Director of the NPA AGERPRES
9. Maria Schifirneț, Vice-President of the NPA AGERPRES Journalists Trade Union, coordinator of the Press Department of the Romania Federation of Journalists MediaSind
10. Dan Mihăiescu, Vice-president of the Professional Journalists Trade Union
11. Dan Șanta, Head of the International Relations Department of the Romania Society of the Radio Broadcasting
12. Zorin Diaconescu, editorial counsellor of the President-Chairman of the Romania Society of the Radio Broadcasting
13. Andras Istvan Demeter, President-Chairman of the Romanian Society of Radio Broadcasting
14. Alexandru Lăzescu, President-Chairman of the Romanian Society of Television
15. Teodor Vasiliu, President of the Romanian Employers Organisation ROMEDIA
16. Iacob Baci, President of the Romanian Democratic Trade Unions Confederation
17. Carmen Ionescu, head of the International Relations Department, the Romanian Democratic Trade Unions Confederation
18. Cezar Ioan Corîci, President of the Romanian General Union of the Industrialists 1903

List of Participants at the Round Table on “Mass-Media – the challenges and the opportunities of the 2011 year” - 4 February 2011

1. Mihai Marc, The Embassy of Germany
2. Balazs Adam, Politics Department counsellor of the Embassy of Hungary
3. Yoann Talhouarne, audiovisual Department of the Embassy of France
4. Gabriela Manea, the Embassy of Holland
5. Alexandru Lăzescu, President - Chair Man of the Romanian Society of Television (RSTV)

6. Andras Istvan Demeter, President - Chair Man of the Romanian Society of Radio Broadcasting (RSR)
7. Argentina Traicu, Vice-Director of the National Press Agency AGERPRES (NPA AGERPRES)
8. Cătălina Matei, editor in chief of the NPA AGERPRES
9. Sorin Rada, Vice-President of the TV Department of the Romanian Federation of Journalists MediaSind
10. Sorin Burtea, member of the Administration Council of the RSTV
11. Dani Constantin, member of the RFJ MediaSind, producer RSTV
12. Larisa Ghițulescu, Director of the PR Department of the RST
13. Horia Giușcă, editor at the RSTV
14. Dan Șanta, Head of the International Relations Department of the Romania Society of the Radio Broadcasting
15. Zorin Diaconescu, editorial counsellor of the President-Chairman of the Romania Society of the Radio Broadcasting
16. Cezar Ion, Romanian Journalists Association
17. Victor Boștinăru, euro deputy
18. Iuian Donici, counsellor of Victor Boștinăru, euro deputy
19. Renate Weber, euro deputy
20. Maria Schifirneț, Vice-President of the NPA AGERPRES Journalists Trade Union, coordinator of the Press Department of the Romania Federation of Journalists MediaSind
21. Ioana Avădani, Executive Director of the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ)
22. Cristina Lupu, Program Coordinator of CIJ
23. Mircea Toma, President of the Active Watch Press Monitoring Agency
24. Maria Popa, Active Watch Press Monitoring Agency
25. Alexandru Mărgăritescu, Director of PR Department of the Romanian National Press
26. Cezar Ioan Corîci, President of the Romanian General Union of the Industrialists 1903
27. Cristi Godinac, President of the Romanian Federation of Journalists MediaSind (RFJ)
28. Adrian Valentin Moise, Vice-President of the Radio Broadcasting Department of the RFJ MediaSind
29. Marius Drăghici, freelancer journalist
30. Tania Istrate, PR Department of the RFJ MediaSind
31. Constantin Rădulescu, RODIPET
32. Marinela Balabuți, Director of the Legislation Department fo the Bucharest Territorial Labour Inspectorate
33. Rodica Anghel, National Council of the Audiovisual
34. Marian Balcan, President of the 2002 Trade Union from the RSTV
35. Cristian Mititelu, National Council of the Audiovisual
36. Bogdan Gamalet, President of the Professional Pressmen Union
37. Elena Coman, PR Manager Soros Foundation
38. Petru Zoltan, Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism (RCIJ)

39. Doina Șerban, European Parliament Representation in Romania
40. Radu Popescu, lawyer
41. Andrei Ioniță, President of the Students at Journalism and Communication Association
42. Michael Bird, Editor in chief, The Diplomat newspaper
43. Constantin Oprișiu, Professional Pressmen Union
44. Gabriela Moise, RFJ MediaSind
45. Iulia Petre, NPA AGERPRES
46. Ioana Stățescu, Radio Romania
47. Adrian Cristea, Radio Romania
48. Liliana Simionescu, Radio France Internationale
49. Bărgăoanu Alina, Hotnews
50. Mădălina Cerban, MEDIAFAX reporter
51. Maria Lazăr Pop, Adevărul newspaper
52. Costea Daniel, The Money Channel
53. Simina Mistreanu, www.wall-street.ro
54. Adrian Iclozan, The Money Channel
55. Dan Mihăiescu, NPA AGERPRES
56. Florin Budescu, www.StareaPresei.ro
57. Tuță Radu, NPA AGERPRES
58. Andrei Niculescu, Professional Journalists' Trade Union
59. Ana Pleșcan, 2002 Trade Union from RSTV

ANNEX III – Joint Declaration on Licence Fee

The elimination of the Romanian Television Society's fee is unacceptable

The Centre for Independent Journalism, ActiveWatch - Media Monitoring Agency and the Romanian Federation of Journalists MediaSind, protest against the adoption by the Chamber of Deputies of the legislative the proposal which removes the tax obligation for public television services and demands the Senate, as a decisional Parliament Chamber, to reject the bill.

On the 5th of February, expired the term of 45 days when the Chamber of Deputies may have decided on an initiative aimed by the Social Democratic Party parliamentary group amending art. 40 of Law no. 41/1994 on the Romanian Broadcasting Society (RTBS) and the Romanian Television Society's (RTS) organization and functioning. In the absence of any debate on this initiative, the bill was considered to be tacitly approved and submitted to the Senate.

The signatories believe that this legislative initiative endangers de facto existence of the public television and thereby, seriously affects every citizen's constitutional right to information.

The signatory organizations consider that the reasons given by the initiators of the draft Law are not sustained and are misleading both the public and the Parliament.

The explanatory memorandum states that the RTS receives money from the state budget. Hereby, the television fee would constitute a "double tax". According to its internal operation Law, the purpose of the funds the RTS receives from the state budget is strictly limited. They are (funds) allocated almost exclusively for "using transmitters, radio-relays and video and phonic circuits". Those funds actually go to the National Broadcasting Company. RTS depends on the income resulted from the program production's fee. The Romanian Broadcasting Society is based on the same mechanism. In this case, the initiators of the Law have no problem to maintain it without consider it double taxation.

The Law supporters' also argue that owners' number of television receivers "has been considerably reduced" due to the proliferation of the TV programs' Internet distribution. Television consumption data contradict

that assertion. According to the EUMAP study on television in Romania, the number of viewers increased from the 17.8 million in 2008 to 18,600,000 in 2009 and to 19.4 million in the first half of 2010. We call, to that effect, the developers of the Law to make publicly available the studies that formed the basis for the explanatory memorandum.

The signatories consider that any discussion on the public radio and television's financing should be worn only in the context of providing the necessary resources to fulfil their public mandate. We admonish the Romanian politicians the fact Romania has international commitments on supporting the audiovisual public services and ensuring their independence, all-in financially.

We urge the Romanian political class to act responsibly and with due respect to the public and to the undisputable values such as truth and freedom of information.

*The Centre for Independent Journalism: Ioana Avadani, Executive Director
ActiveWatch - Media Monitoring Agency: Mircea Toma, President
The Romanian Federation of Journalists MediaSind: Cristi Godinac,
President*

9 February 2011

ANNEX IV – EFJ Press Release

04 February 2011 / EFJ Promotes Journalism as a Public Good to Counter Romania Crisis

<http://europe.ifj.org/en/articles/efj-promotes-journalism-as-a-public-good-to-counter-romania-crisis>

Romania like other countries in Eastern Europe must embrace a new ethical and moral narrative to support journalism as a public good says the European Federation of Journalists which today concluded a two day mission to Bucharest.

The mission met journalists' leaders, policymakers, and heads of the country's state funded radio and television networks and news agency and held a consultation with 50 journalists and media activists this morning.

EFJ General Secretary Aidan White said that the media crisis in Romania required a new vision of the role of journalism in society. "It's time to end all forms of political manipulation, to support a new vision of moral and ethical journalism and to urgently improve the social and professional conditions in which journalists work," he said. "This is the right way to confront the social and economic crisis facing Romanian society."

He outlined a number of urgent issues for action including:

- drastic underfunding of public service media,
- improved wages and work conditions for editorial staff,
- improving the status of journalists as independent professionals not civil servants.

The mission supported the union MediaSind which has recently successfully negotiated a new collective agreement for journalists that includes a conscience clause, but which is also fighting attempts at government level to suppress workers bargaining rights across all sectors of the economy.

"Attempts to remove mass media from the industrial relations scene will diminish further the status of journalism," said Cristi Godinac, President of MediaSind, "we will challenge this draft law at the Constitutional Court and with European institutions if necessary".

The mission also highlighted the campaign to remove from national security policy a government policy that identifies media as a potential "threat" to

Romania. The EFJ and members of the European Parliament are working together to get the policy reversed.

"The crisis in Romania is a reflection of the attacks on independent journalism across the whole of the region," said White. "In Hungary, Bulgaria and elsewhere we see how political actions are eroding public confidence in journalism. We need to launch a counter campaign that puts ethical, independent journalism at the heart of the struggle for democracy."

Other members of the mission were EJP Co-director Marc Gruber and Moshos Voitsidis, President of the Journalists' Union of Macedonia and Thrace. A full report including recommendations for support of journalists in Romania will be published later this month.

The EFJ represents over 260,000 journalists in 30 countries

For more information contact the EFJ at +32 2 235.2200

ANNEX V – Reports in Media

- **FRJ MediaSind:** *“Mesajul Misiunii Federației Europene a Jurnaliștilor: „Identificarea presei drept o potențială amenințare la adresa securității naționale este inacceptabilă”*, available at:
<http://www.mediasind.ro/comunicate-1/mesajulmisiuniifederatieieuropeneajurnalistilorpentrupoliticieniiromani%E2%80%9Eidentificareapreseidreptopotentialaamenintarelaadresasecuritatiinationaleesteinacceptabila%E2%80%9D>
- **Radio France Internationale:** *“Presă din România: provocări în 2011”*, available at: <http://www.rfi.ro/articol/stiri/social/presa-romania-provocari-2011>
- **BLOG Victor Boștinaru:** *Este inacceptabil faptul că CSAT a identificat mass-media drept o amenințare*, available at:
<http://victorbostinaru.ro/?p=1918>
- **Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent:** *“Aidan White: Pentru mass media e nevoie de mai multe politici și mai puține legi”*, available at :
<http://www2.cji.ro/articol.php?article=1203>
- **Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent:** *“Federația Europeană a Jurnaliștilor promovează Jurnalismul ca bun public pentru a înfrunța criza în România”*, available at:
<http://www2.cji.ro/articol.php?article=1202>
- **CORECT Politics:** *Aidan White (FIJ): Identificarea presei ca o amenințare la siguranța națională, inacceptabilă*, available at:
<http://news.corect.com/politics/intern/aidan-white-fij-identificarea-presei-ca-o-amenintare-la-siguranta-nationala-inaccept>
- **Reporter Virtual:** *“FEJ promovează jurnalismul ca bun public pentru a înfrunța criza în România”*, available at:
<http://www.reportervirtual.ro/2011/02/fej-promoveaza-jurnalismul-ca-bun-public-pentru-a-infrunta-criza-in-romania.html>
- **AGERPRES:** *“Problemele jurnaliștilor din România-tema unei mese rotunde cu participare internațională”*, available at:

<http://www.mediasind.ro/news/agerpresproblemelejurnalistilordinromania-temauneimeserotundecuparticipareinternationala>

- **MediaAddict:** *“Mass-media din România – provocările și oportunitățile anului 2011”*, available at:
<http://www.mediaddict.ro/2011/02/mass-media-din-romania-%E2%80%93-provocarile-si-oportunitatile-anului-2011/>
- **StirideBine:** *“Ziaristii dezbat la o masa rotunda pe tema “Mass-media din Romania”*, available at:
<http://www.stiridebine.ro/ziaristii-dezbat-la-o-masa-rotunda-pe-tema-mass-media-din-romania>
- **The Epoch Times:** *“Problemele presei in dezbaterea ziaristilor”*, available at:
http://www.epochtimes-romania.com/articles/2011/02/article_100266.html
- **Fabrica de bani:** *“Problemele presei in dezbatere”*, available at:
<http://www.fabricadebani.ro/news.aspx?iid=30667>
- **StareaPresei.ro:** *“Federația Europeană a Jurnaliștilor promovează jurnalismul ca bun public, pentru a înfrunta criza în România”*, available at:
<http://www.stareapresei.ro/federatia-europeana-a-jurnalistilor-promoveaza-jurnalismul-ca-bun-public-pentru-a-infrunta-criza-in-romania-17528.html>
- **Liga Jurnaliștilor Sibiu** „Mass-media din Romania – provocarile si oportunitatile anului 2011”, available at:
<http://ligajurnalistilorsibiu.blogspot.com/2011/02/invitatie-pentru-presa-mass-media-din.html>
- **StareaPresei.ro:** *“Provocarile si oportunitatile 2011 in mass-media”*, available at:
<http://www.stareapresei.ro/provocarile-si-oportunitatile-2011-in-mass-media-17467.html>
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- **Reportages at Romanian National Television, Romanian National Radio Broadcasting**
- **NAP AGERPRES:** *„Problems faced by journalists in Romania - main topic of a round table discussion with international participation”*

Bucharest, Feb 4 /Agerpres/ - The problems the journalists in Romania are confronted with, from the freedom of the press to the ones caused by the social and economic crisis, was the main topic of the round table discussion "Mass Media in Romania: Challenges and Opportunities in 2011", organized by the MediaSind Romanian Federation of Journalists on Friday.

The event was organized on the occasion of the visit paid to Romania of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) General secretary, Aidan White, of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) director, Marc Gruber and of the EFJ Steering Committee member, Moschos Voitsidis.

The IFJ and EFJ representatives have been in Romania on a fact-finding mission and the report drawn up after this mission will be sent to national and international organizations.

Executive director of the Centre for Independent Journalism (CJI) Ioana Avadani enumerated a “list of problems” the press in Romania was confronted with. The National Defence Strategy, which includes the press as a possible threat to state security is at the top of the list. On the same list there are, among other things, the depoliticization and underfunding of media institutions and the collective bargaining agreements not being observed. “We have gone through two years of crisis, which changed the media landscape in Romania,” said the CJI official.

In his turn, Aidan White voiced concern over the fact that the highest Romanian authorities view the press as a potential danger to state security.

He underlined that such a statement included in the Strategy's document was against the Constitution of Romania, the European Convention on Human Rights and the foundations of the freedom of speech and it was unacceptable for a political strategy to identify the free press as potentially threatening for the country.

The same aspect was also criticized by Social Democrat Euro-parliamentarian Victor Bostinaru.

"In the battle carried out in the European Parliament, following the obvious obstructions by some Romanian state's structures, we benefited of IFJ backing. Why this national defense strategy is unacceptable from the European angle? In contrast with the Hungarian law (...) Romania's defense strategy is equally coward and perverse, the Hungarians had the arrogance to say it squarely and put there aberrations derived from early Nazi-Communist-Horthyst pattern. The Romanian mechanism is much more treacherous and coward ", said MEP Victor Bostinaru.

The Social Democrat MEP said he plans to submit in the next period, a petition to the European Parliament which wants to draw attention upon the fact that there is an intention to eliminate the press as an industrial branch from the future labor legislation. After the petition will be registered, he added, the document will also receive the opinion of the Committee on employment of the European Parliament.

Liberal MEP Renate Weber believes that the number of populist governments has increased during the economic crisis and that populists tend to identify enemies in the media sphere. "The economic crisis in the European Union increased the number of populist governments, even those who were more reasonable have gone populist. But Hungary has managed to take from every legislation what was the worst and make a 'Frankenstein'. (. ..) If we lose here, this is the beginning of the end of the right to freedom of expression in the European Union", Renate Weber warned, referring to the Hungarian media law.

She said that it was decided that, each year, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights will make a comparative analysis of the media situation in each EU member state, and representatives of this agency are to be invited to the European Parliament plenum for debates. She also announced that it was decided the drafting of a report within the European Parliament set to address the minimum standards necessary in any democratic state referring to the freedom of the press.

The President of MediaSind Romanian Federation of Journalists, Cristi Godinac, emphasized that the issues the journalists guild are facing in Romania have turned increasingly serious.

"We see the current power desire to muzzle freedom of expression and, here, I want to refer mainly to the National defense strategy of the country, where media activities are branded as vulnerable to national security," said Cristi Godinac. The current governance plan to amend the current labor law, the "underfunding" of the public radio, television, AGERPRES National Press Agency, lack of any facilities for the media industry were among the aspects emphasized by Godinac.

All speakers have associated the "danger" created by the new Hungarian law against the freedom of the press with what is happening in our country.

"A fundamental problem in the Romanian society is that the needed benchmarks have disappeared rapidly (...) mass media has slipped into the most degrading state ethically and professionally in the past 20 years", President and General Manager of TVR, Alexander Lazescu, underscored in his turn.

Cezar Ioan Corici, President of the General Union of Industrialists in Romania, believes that the pressure put on the press in the past year, because of the "current Government incapacity to dialogue", is terrible.

"There are two types of pressure. A government, if it wants to violate citizens' rights to information, which is part of the fundamental human rights, can take action in two, or in fact three directions. One is an adverse legislative action, attempts to ban certain rights and freedoms, in fact more or less directly by employing some legislative instruments, the second one by using economics. What could be more simple than to batter the big press trusts almost daily with a fiscal control, and that for months? ", stated Cezar Ioan Corici.

Mircea Toma, president of the Media Monitoring Agency, said that, in his opinion, "none of those who are now in power wants a genuine independent television."

"The Rodipet Employees' Union has affiliated to Mediasind, we know the issues related to the destruction of the most important press distribution institution in the country, we are going to file a complaint together with our colleagues with the Prosecutors' Office, as well as with the Government and AVAS, we want to pull an alarm on willful bankruptcy and destruction of the most important press distribution institution, Rodipet ", Cristi Godinac was also keen to remind on the other hand.

At the end of the round table, Aidan White was conferred the Honorary membership of MediaSind. (AGERPRES)



European
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ARNE KÖNIG

General Secretary
AIDAN WHITE

Co-Directors
RENATE SCHROEDER & MARC GRUBER

About the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) is a regional organisation of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). It represents the interests of journalists' unions and their members. The EFJ is Europe's largest organisation of journalists, representing about 260.000 journalists in over thirty countries.

The EFJ fights for social and professional rights of journalists working in all sectors of the media.

The EFJ is recognized by the European Union, the Council of Europe and the European Trade Union Confederation as the representative voice of journalists in Europe.

The EFJ has its headquarters in Brussels.

The EFJ supports its affiliates to foster trade unions, to recruit new members and to maintain or create environments in which quality, journalistic independence, pluralism, public service values and decent work in the media exist.