

SECRETARIAT

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**Public statement to the Government of Serbia,**

The board of the European Alliance of News Agencies (EANA) wishes to place on record its strong protest and surprise over the Serbian government’s decision to discontinue the operations of Tanjug news agency. The EANA board finds it essential that the government now makes public the background and arguments for its decision concerning Tanjug.

In a public statement of October 12, 2015, the EANA board has extensively explained why it is of the utmost importance to safeguard Tanjug in its role as a provider of unbiased news to Serbian and international media.

We recognise the government’s privatisation plans and ambition to cut costs etc but find the decision to discontinue the Tanjug operations short sighted and in conflict with a democratic society’s necessity to secure reliable news media that citizens can rely on the stay informed.

The EANA board is at your disposal and members of the board can visit you in Belgrade at any time that is convenient to you for a discussion about the importance of unbiased news providers in general and Tanjug in particular.

With this statement, the EANA board strongly urges the Serbian government to reverse the decision to discontinue Tanjug’s operations.

The EANA board is looking forward to having the government’s answer, preferably by email to the EANA secretariat (erik-n@telia.com).

Attached to this statement you will find the EANA board’s statement of October 12, 2015.

November 6, 2015

For the EANA Board,

Clive Marshall

CEO PA Group and President EANA

**Copy of EANA board public statement October 12, 2015**



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**Public Statement to the Government of Serbia,**

It is alarming that the future of Serbian news agency Tanjug is threatened after what seems to be a second failed attempt to privatise the agency. The board of the European Alliance of News Agencies (EANA) is urging the Serbian government to make changes needed to secure the agency’s mission as a provider of unbiased news reports to Serbian and international media.

Tanjug’s continued operation as a provider of unbiased news services is vital both for media pluralism in Serbia and for information about Serbia in the European media community. In a time of hardship, dramatic international developments including migration affecting the whole of Europe, it is important to secure the trustworthy and internationally respected Tanjug brand that citizens can rely on in order to be well informed.

Tanjug is a well-known brand in the news agency business and the agency has for decades now been a member of the international news agency community. Tanjug was one of the founders of the European Alliance of News Agencies when a number of European news agencies in 1956 decided to create a news agency organisation for cooperation and the exchange of experiences etc. The agency has under the present management been re-vitalised both financially and editorially. This positive development led to that CEO, Ms Branka Djukic, a few years ago was awarded the European EANA Award for Excellence in News Agency Quality,

For a news agency´s trustworthiness, both within the country and towards its international partners, it is vital that the ownership structure, whichever one chosen, is clear, transparent and makes the provision of true and unbiased news the foremost editorial goal. The EANA member agencies represent various forms of ownership, both private and public. EANA represents European news agencies in contacts with the EU Commission etc to secure economic and legal environments for news agencies operating in accordance with the principles of press freedom and unbiased news.

We appreciate the Serbian government´s ambition to modernise the rules under which Tanjug operates but it is important that the lack of interest for privatisation of the agency under the present legal framework does not threaten the agency’s mission. The board is therefore urging the government to make the changes needed to secure the agency’s mission under whatever ownership arrangements chosen.

The EANA board takes it that the Serbian government is open for a discussion on how to secure Tanjug’s future as an unbiased and respected news provider and the board would appreciate a meeting with the government for a discussion about media pluralism, ownership structures and Tanjug’s future. We look forward to as soon as possible know when we can visit the Serbian government for such a discussion.

October 12, 2015

Clive Marshall, CEO of PA Group, London and President, EANA

Branka Gabriela Valentic, CEO of HINA, Zagreb and Board Member, EANA

Jonas Eriksson, CEO of TT, Stockholm and Board Member, EANA

Alexandru Giboi, CEO of Agerpres, Bucharest and Board Member, EANA

Erik Nylen, Stockholm, Secretary General, EANA