

## INTRODUCTORY SPEECH - IVAR RUSDAL

**ENPA 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Congress  
Brussels, 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2011**

Vice-President Reding,  
(Commissioners)  
Members of the European Parliament,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As President of the European Newspaper Publishers' Association, I have the honour - and pleasure! - to welcome you to ENPA's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Congress on *The Future of Press in Europe*.

Today's Congress is the highlight of ENPA's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. The very fact that this association can trace its history back half a century, shows how newspaper publishers were among the first to realise the importance of the European Community. And as the composition of the present audience demonstrates - we have come a long way from our modest beginnings as *CAEJ (Communauté des Associations d'Éditeurs de Journaux)* in 1961 to the ENPA of today.

In 2011, ENPA promotes the interests of newspaper publishers on all platforms, both in the print and digital environment. Newspaper companies are linked to ENPA through its 26 national member associations. In total, we represent over 5,200 national, regional and local newspaper titles, published in the European Union, as well as in Norway, Switzerland and Serbia.

Every day more than 150 million national, regional and local newspapers are sold or distributed. Every day more than 300 million people Europeans read a newspaper - on *paper* - in addition to the countless millions who visit our members' websites 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This is the essence of ENPA.

The essence - or rather, *the spirit* of ENPA is also reflected in the many brilliant people who have served our association over the years: I take particular pleasure in welcoming several former Presidents of ENPA who have joined us today: *Alvin Sold* from Luxembourg, *Dominique Alduy* from France and *Valdo Lehari jr* from Germany.

In addition we have many other old friends in the room, including three previous executive directors of ENPA – *Michel Vanderstraeten*, *Dietmar Wolff* and *Valtteri Niiranen*. Not to mention former ENPA staff members from over the years who have come back to join us for this special occasion. You are all very warmly welcome.

A 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary is a time for taking stock of progress made so far. And I can say that we are proud that in the last five decades, newspapers have contributed much to an open and democratic society in Europe. This has been particularly important during the great changes our continent has seen since the fall of the Iron Curtain. Today, it is worth reminding ourselves that no matter how or when we print or publish, the core of our business remains the same: To provide news, to explain the news, to act as the watchdogs of society - but also to be the «glue» that makes societies stick together - in other words: *To promote the truth in such a way that we can build our business on our readers' confidence in us.*

This fiftieth anniversary is also a good moment to look forward to future goals and opportunities for newspaper publishers. In this context, it is a common misunderstanding that our business sector is a dying one.

True enough, the news media sector in Europe is facing many challenges: falling print circulation, a downturn in advertising in some markets, strains on consumer spending, changing consumption patterns and new regulatory initiatives. Then of course there is the challenge – common to all creative industries – how to monetise content on the Internet and other digital platforms?

But other facts show that news publishing in Europe continues to be a vital and profitable business. Today we are launching a new publication called “50 Ideas for the Future of Newspapers”. This publication shows how publishers are investing heavily in a huge range of different initiatives, services and products.

While the projects described are very diverse, they all have one aim in common. That goal is to provide readers with the immense range of quality news, views and information that they expect to receive every day.

Newspapers have always relied on the creativity of their staff. Today, publishers are combining that creativity with business innovation. Whether it is developing new applications for tablets, harnessing the power of social media, coming up with imaginative marketing schemes or capturing the attention of young readers, newspapers are busy innovating their way to the future.

I have already emphasized to you that *no free society can exist without freedom of expression and freedom of the press*. These freedoms are as vital today as they ever were. Any new policy initiative should, therefore, take full account of the special mission that «the press» (in the widest sense) fulfils in democratic societies.

So what is our birthday wish to mark this 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary? It is of course not the role of the EU institutions to come up with new business models. That is our job as publishers. Yet we do rely on the EU to provide a legal framework in which the newspaper business can grow and evolve in the next half century. I could probably name 50 asks, but I'll spare you that, and confine myself to three:

- It is essential that legislators, commercial operators and consumers recognise **the value of creative content and respect of copyright**. The EU goal of allowing citizens to enjoy culture and services across borders can only be achieved by **placing value of content at the heart of the Digital Agenda**.

- Furthermore, the future development of our sector depends on establishing **win-win partnerships** with technology platforms and other players in the ICT sector. Publishers want to enter into free and fair negotiations and agreements with technology partners, that recognise the great contribution of newspapers to the value chain.
- Last but not least, at the European level, legislators have long recognised the essential role that newspapers play in democratic societies. This has been reflected in the VAT rates applied to the press in a majority of countries. In the European Commission's current review of the VAT System in the European Union, it is indispensable that the **zero, super reduced or reduced VAT** rates for printed newspapers are maintained. In addition, the EU institutions should look again at the fact that the press on digital formats is still subject to standard VAT rates. This distinction is simply out of date. Member States should be able to align the VAT rates for digital newspapers to the existing rates for printed editions. Ideally, **reading should not be taxed at all.**

To sum up, getting the EU legal and policy framework right is essential to our business. It is also the best way to ensure that in 50 years' time, the next generation of publishers will be celebrating a sector that continues to act as the essential watchdog of democracy.

With these words, I have the privilege of introducing the opening speaker of ENPAs 50th Anniversary Congress: Vice-President of the European Commission, Mrs Viviane Reding, the floor is yours.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.