

Press Release

European Commission President Barroso underlines vital role of the press in society at ENPA 50th Anniversary

Brussels, 8th November 2011 – The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, emphasized the essential role of the press in democratic society, in a keynote speech at the 50th Anniversary Congress of the European Newspaper Publishers' Association in Brussels today.

Addressing an audience that included publishers from all over Europe, President Barroso said: “Freedom of expression and the freedom of the press are two non-negotiable freedoms that lie at the very heart of our democratic societies. They are essential core values of the EU and you can be assured that the Commission will continue to defend them vigorously.”

In the opening speech of the conference, European Commission Vice-President and EU Justice Commissioner, Viviane Reding, stressed the role of the professional press in contributing to informed and engaged citizens in Europe: “There is nothing like a strong press to keep politicians sharp and on track,” she said. “Newspapers are just as relevant today in the digital era as they were 50 years ago. They are, also at European level, the “fourth estate” acting as a control on the executive, on the legislators and on the judiciary,” added Vice-President Reding.

ENPA called on the EU institutions to ensure that Europe has a legislative framework in which the newspaper sector can continue to inform, educate and engage readers on all platforms. ENPA President, Ivar Rusdal, said: “The newspaper sector will have a future as vital as its past, if we get the basics right. That includes promoting respect for copyright, ensuring a level playing field with the technology platforms that are our new business partners and providing a VAT system that promotes, rather than hinders, the development of newspapers on all platforms.”

The ENPA Congress included two policy panels on “The Role of Newspapers in Democratic Society” and “The Future of News Media”, comprising Members of the European Parliament, senior representatives of European institutions, publishers and journalists.

In the closing speech of the Congress, Commissioner Michel Barnier, who is responsible for Internal Market and Services, highlighted the value of creative content and the necessity of promoting paid for business models also in the digital environment. Commissioner Barnier said: “In a world of abundant information flows, independent press and quality journalism are more important than ever. Rather than a threat, the Internet can be an enabler. I want to make sure that European laws are pitched properly to incentivise new business models that safeguard the values that the members of ENPA stand for.”

ENPA also launched a new publication entitled “50 Ideas for the Future of Newspapers”, with a foreword by European Commission Vice-President, Neelie Kroes, who is responsible for the Digital Agenda. The publication gives lively examples from all over Europe of the creativity and innovation in today’s newspaper sector.

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*Please find enclosed a link to the speech of Viviane Reding, Vice-President of the European Commission, EU Justice Commissioner at the ENPA 50th anniversary Congress Brussels, 8 November 2011: “**Five decades in the news - Europe and the ENPA**”*

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/11/726&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

The European Newspaper Publishers' Association is an international non-profit organisation representing newspapers on all platforms. ENPA represents over 5,200 national, regional and local newspaper titles, published in 23 EU Member States, plus Norway, Switzerland and Serbia.

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