

Statement of the Euronova Media Grup

July 22, 2005

The Coordinating Council of Audiovisual obstructs the development of the Euronova Media Grup holding components, makes the conclusion the Independent Journalism Center that has been observing this case for more than six months and has gathered information on the difficulties faced by the holding. The broadcast institutions within the holding are harassed and unfairly treated and the Coordinating Council of Audiovisual does not have sufficiently grounded reasons to justify its actions.

Thus, the CCA insists to oppose the extension of the coverage area of Vocea Basarabiei Radio station and does not allow the Euronova Media Grup holding components to create an independent network with national coverage. At the contest of June 14, 2005 for the use of available radio frequencies and TV channels, the CCA preferred to return a significant amount of radio frequencies and TV channels to the Ministry of Information Development than to distribute them to the Euronova Media Grup holding. Thus, the CCA, instead of contributing to the maximum use of frequencies and distributing the frequencies solicited by equal competitors for the audience to have maximum access to information and a larger possibility of choice, prefers to return the frequencies without offering anything to the audience. If there are serious reasons for a frequency to stay free, those have to be announced, and the audience has to be involved in making such decisions of community interest, where possible. Unfortunately, the CCA's decisions are not even motivated and the audience is neither asked nor involved in the decision-making process. The failure to use radio frequencies and TV channels causes damage to the population because of the lack of additional and alternative information and entertainment sources, as well as economic damage – the existence and development of broadcast institutions brings profit to the state and generates new employment opportunities.

The CCA's arguments for rejecting the common broadcast program of „Telecanal-26”, „Megan-TV”, „Albasat TV” and „TV-Euronova” TV stations are groundless, saying that these stations would also rebroadcast, while they plan to broadcast original programs in the proportion of 72% weekly.

We consider the amount and the nature of administrative sanctions applied within a short period of time to Mr. Efim Bardan, Director of “Albasat TV” station, Nisporeni town, to be clear evidence of harassment. Within the months of March and May 2005, Efim Bardan was applied 4 administrative sanctions for an overall amount of 9,900 MDL. The abusive nature of the administrative sanctions has been also proven by the courts that have cancelled the 4 applied sanctions.

While assessing the above-mentioned facts and receiving notifications from the Euronova Media Group holding on recent intimidations on the part of the Information and Security Service, we make the conclusion that these actions are of a political nature and aim at stopping the development process of a national network by Euronova. The pluralism of opinions is affected and the right of the audience to diverse and multi-aspectual information is violated in the name of certain political interests that are easy to realize.

We solicit all the Moldovan authorities and, especially, the CCA to undertake appropriate measures with the view to supporting national broadcast institutions.

**The Independent Journalism Center monitors the cases of groundless restriction of the freedom of expression of the mass media and shall present them in the annual report.*