

## NEWS RELEASE - 30 March 2010

### **Estonia comes under growing international pressure to reject a proposed new law that "poses a serious threat to freedom of the press"**

The leading European and global press and journalists' organisations are calling on the Estonian Parliament to reject a proposal for a new law that would force journalists to reveal their sources or risk being sent to prison. Newspaper publishers and journalists have expressed their deep concern that the draft law now being considered by the Estonian Parliament "poses a serious threat to freedom of the press".

Estonia's Justice Minister Rein Lang recently introduced draft legislation to the Estonian Parliament that would oblige journalists to reveal the sources of the information they use. If adopted by the Parliament, the new law would enable courts to jail journalists who fail to reveal their sources and to impose fines on newspapers solely on the suspicion that they intend to publish "potentially harmful information".

The proposed law is being strongly opposed by the Estonian Newspaper Association (EALL). On 18 March, all of the six major national newspapers in Estonia took part in a coordinated joint action to protest against the draft law. Three of the newspapers left their front page blank, except for a short text expressing their opposition to the draft law. The other three titles did the same with inside pages.

The Estonian press is being supported by the European Newspaper Publishers' Association (ENPA), the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum, and the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ). These organisations have sent a joint letter (sent on 29 March) to the President of Estonia, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, calling on him "to do everything possible to ensure that the proposed unprecedented draft law is rejected in its current form and that amendments are introduced to provide full protection for journalists' sources". They urge President Ilves to take "all necessary steps" to ensure that Estonia "fully respects its international obligations and standards of press freedom".

Press and journalists' organisations are afraid that the proposed law would have a significant negative impact on investigative journalism and articles based on information provided by whistleblowers. Furthermore, the draft law is in clear conflict with Estonia's treaty obligations, international standards of professional practice and codes of journalism ethics, including The Code of Ethics of the Estonian Press.

END



### **European Newspaper Publishers' Association (ENPA)**

ENPA represents over 5,200 national, regional and local newspaper titles, published in 25 European countries. More than 150 million newspapers are sold or distributed and read by over 300 million Europeans every day, in addition to the tens of millions of unique daily visits to newspapers' websites.

More information about ENPA can be found at [www.enpa.be](http://www.enpa.be)

Contact: Ben Carlin, European Policy Advisor

Tel: +32 2 551 01 90 / e-mail: [ben.carlin@enpa.be](mailto:ben.carlin@enpa.be)

### **World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)**

WAN-IFRA is the global organization for the world's newspapers and news publishers, with formal representative status at the United Nations, UNESCO and the Council of Europe. The organization groups 18,000 publications, 15,000 online sites and over 3,000 companies in more than 120 countries.

More information about WAN-IFRA can be found at [www.wan-ifra.org](http://www.wan-ifra.org)

Contact: Larry Kilman, Director of Communications and Public Affairs

Tel: +33 6 10 28 97 36 / e-mail: [larry.kilman@wan-ifra.org](mailto:larry.kilman@wan-ifra.org)

### **European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)**

The EFJ is the European group of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). The EFJ represents about 250,000 journalists in over thirty countries. 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.

More information about the EFJ can be found at <http://europe.ifj.org>

Contact: Marc Gruber, European Federation of Journalists

Tel: + 32 2 235 22 00 / e-mail: [marc.gruber@ifj.org](mailto:marc.gruber@ifj.org)