

The Romanian Senate

Mrs. Lia Olguța Vasilescu
Member of the Romanian Parliament
Calea 13 Septembrie, nr. 1-3,
Sector 5, Bucharest.

18 August 2010

Subject: Draft law regulating Internet forums

Dear Mrs. Vasilescu,

Reporters Without Borders and its Romanian partner organisation ActiveWatch are concerned about your intention to promote a bill that would ban any kind of insulting comment from websites, especially media websites, and restrict access to certain websites and forums for those who use abusive language.

We believe such a bill would endanger freedom of speech and the freedom of websites and web forums to regulate themselves.

The bill's proponents say other countries have passed legislation regulating the comments of Internet users, but that is a misleading. There are indeed such cases but they are hardly relevant. For example, such a law was recently adopted in Jordan, a country with a very poor human rights record. Restrictive Internet legislation is also to be found in Turkey, a country whose entry into the European Union is being held up in large part because its human rights violations.

The European Court of Human Rights, an undisputed bulwark of free speech, has often ruled in favour of journalists and ordinary citizens who have used shocking, exaggerated or insulting language. The right to freedom of expression has repeatedly prevailed over the arguments of those who felt they had been offended. The same principle is applied by the US Supreme Court.

As a member of the European Union, Romania has a duty to promote a free and independent Internet, one free of all laws which could encroach on the vast area of freedom it represents. The support of all parliamentarians, European and national, is essential for the defence of the Internet's future and for the credibility of Europe's promotion of fundamental freedoms.

We therefore urge you to withdraw your support for this bill and we remain at your disposal should you need any further information.

Sincerely,



Jean-François Julliard
Reporters Without Borders

Liana Ganea
ActiveWatch

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