



ACT calls on EU to uphold media freedom in Albania

Brussels, 21 March 2013 - European commercial broadcasters have reacted with alarm to reports from Albania that the market-leading independent TV station Top Channel is once again coming under political pressure as that country faces crucial elections.

This latest development is a move to evict Top Channel and its studios from their current premises. This follows many years of court cases instigated by the government and financial pressure, including allegations that taxpayers' money in the form of state advertising budgets was diverted to rival, more pro-government outlets.

Speaking in Brussels, **Ross Biggam, director-general of the ACT** called on the EU and international institutions to condemn the actions of the Albanian authorities.

"These worrying reports from Tirana show once again that media freedom can never be taken for granted. Some governments are becoming increasingly sophisticated in the tactics used to restrict the work of independent media, and are using indirect methods such as, in this case, planning law to harass and pressurise journalists.

Albanian viewers clearly value the independence of journalism practiced by Top Channel, as its bulletins are regularly the most-watched in the country. For viewers to be deprived of their favourite independent news outlet in the run-up to an election is incompatible with democratic values.

*A recent **high-level report to the European Commission** commented that*

"As one of the key champions of democracy in the world, the EU must push for the protection of journalistic freedom and media pluralism in its international activities [...] the EU has a responsibility to promote agreed European human rights standards [...which...] are not only part of the EU internal identity but also part of how the Union represents itself to the outside world."

We agree with these recommendations and call on the EU and the international community to act to ensure that independent Albanian journalism is encouraged, rather than pressurised at this critical time in the country's path towards EU membership".



About the ACT:

The Association of Commercial Television in Europe (ACT) represents the interests of the commercial broadcasting sector in Europe. Formed in 1989, the ACT has 33 member companies licensed in 37 different European countries and distributed across 45 European markets and beyond. Our members operate several hundred free-to-air and pay-tv channels and distribute many more channels and new services. The ACT members encompass several business models: free-to-air broadcasters and pay-TV players, digital platform operators and multimedia groups. See www.acte.be.

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