

[YU] Council of the European Union Condemns Serb Media Law

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In a common position based on Article J.2 of the Treaty on European Union, the Council of the European Union has condemned the new Serbian law on the media.

The Law on Public Information of 21 October 1998, which primarily targets non state-controlled media, is considered to be in breach of internationally accepted standards and yet another step in the repression of democratic principles. In early November, the Council had urged the FRY and Serb authorities to bring their media legislation into line with the standards of the Council of Europe.

A visa ban has now been imposed on those responsible for drafting, advocating or taking political advantage of the law.

The main changes in the law include a ban on the retransmission of foreign programmes or individual broadcasts and the power granted the authorities to declare programmes a danger to the state, coupling a ban on transmission with the imposition of criminal sanctions.

Following the introduction of such measures, and according to reports of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, who has already expressed his grave concern over the law, several reputedly independent newspapers and radio stations have been banned.

Common position of the Council of the European Union of 14 December 1998 on restrictive measures to be taken against persons in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia acting against the independent media (98/725/CFSP). OJ EC Nr. L 345/1 of 19 December 1998.

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:1998:345:0001:0002:EN:PDF>

Law on Public Information of 21 October 1998, Official Journal of the Serb Republic No. 36/98.

