

## **Official position of Ukraine**

### **Ukraine Blocks Russian Social Networks and Expands Economic Sanctions Against Russian Companies**

According to the Law of Ukraine "On Sanctions", special economic and other restrictive measures are taken exclusively for the purpose of protecting national interests, national security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, countering terrorist attacks as well as preventing violation and restoring violated rights, freedoms and lawful interests of Ukrainian citizens, society and the state.

Economic sanctions against Russian companies were introduced in response to the temporary occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea by the Russian Federation and its military intervention in eastern Ukraine.

In addition, given the multifaceted nature of the Russian aggression against Ukraine it was presumed that Russian search engines and social media are possibly used to gather restricted access information – namely, personal data of Ukrainian citizens stored on servers located in the territory of the Russian Federation.

According to the Law of the Russian Federation "On Countering Terrorism", the Criminal Procedural Code of the Russian Federation and other legislative acts, intelligence agencies of the Russian Federation collect, store and use the abovementioned data on a regular basis.

Given the policy of aggression that the Russian Federation conducts against Ukraine, access of Russian companies to Ukrainian information and telecommunication systems allows for sabotage, intelligence and subversive activities against Ukraine by Russian intelligence agencies.

Therefore, blocking access to certain Russian Internet resources is exclusively the issue of national security and is not aimed at suppressing the freedom of speech in Ukraine.

The prohibited social networks do not belong to the mass media and have never been considered as such. Moreover, other social networks are available in Ukraine and are fully accessible to Ukrainians.

The Presidential Decree on enforcing the decision of National Council on Security and Defense of Ukraine to expand economic sanctions against Russian companies and to ban Russian Internet resources, including social networks, was adopted exclusively for the purpose of ensuring national security of Ukraine and protecting the right of Ukrainian citizens to freedom of speech and secrecy of correspondence.

The aggression of the Russian Federation and challenges Ukraine is facing concerning the territorial integrity require appropriate measures in response. Such resources as Yandex, Mail.ru, Vkontakte and Odnoklassniki have long been used by Russian intelligence agencies as tools of the so called hybrid warfare. Given the censorship policy, mass surveillance and failure to observe freedom of speech and media in Russia, its intelligence agencies private correspondence

and other confidential information of the users of Russian Internet resources and use these data to manipulate public opinion by means of disinformation, propaganda and information attacks.

Therefore, the decision adopted by Ukrainian authorities is the adequate response to the threat to information security of the state and citizens. Ukraine renews the assurances of its commitment to relevant international obligations, to the rule of law and to the democratic principles of freedom of speech and thought.

The Government of Ukraine invariably considers the freedom of thought and expression to be fundamental values and conducts the policy of their protection and support. We condemn restriction of the freedom of speech and pressure on mass media.