

Ukraine Bans 38 European Journalists and Bloggers over National Interest, Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity

The decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine (NSDC) of 2 September 2015 "On the application of personal special economic and other restrictive measures (sanctions)", enacted by the decree of the President of Ukraine of 16 September 2015 № 549/2015 (hereinafter – the Decision), imposed restrictive sanctions against natural and legal persons for their involvement in the destabilization of Ukraine.

Immediately after the publication of the Decision it became necessary to clarify the sanctions list as concerns persons conducting information activities. In particular, not only professional propagandists who intentionally promote anti-Ukrainian rhetoric fell under the sanctions but also ordinary journalists who expressed their own views. At the same time, regrettably, the list failed to include those persons who influence in a negative manner the opinion of the Ukrainian and international community, distort facts and, due to their top positions in the Russian media, influence its editorial policy.

In order to alleviate the situation resulting from the imposition of sanctions against journalists, Mr Yuri Stets, Minister for Information Policy of Ukraine, convened a working group with the purpose of preparing proposals for amending the NSDC decision concerning media representatives. The working group was composed of members of Parliament, including members of the Committee of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Freedom of Speech and Information Policy, experts, representatives of non-governmental organizations and of the Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine.

The Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine has submitted proposals, resulting from the joint efforts of the working group members, to the Government. The respective draft provided for the lifting of sanctions against media representatives, journalists and bloggers in order to respect the constitutional right to freedom of thought and expression, and to ensure the right to professional journalist activities and the right to express personal views and beliefs as well as the prohibition of censorship.

All proposals for the exclusion of journalists from the list were put forward, agreed and supported by the members of the Parliament of Ukraine, representatives of NGOs and media experts, participating in the activities of the working group. Numerous appeals from foreign diplomatic missions, which expressed their concern at the presence of their citizens in the list, were also taken into account.

The Government supported the proposals of the Ministry, which were subsequently submitted to the National Security and Defense Council. The final changes to the Decision were approved by the decree of the President of Ukraine of 27 May 2016 № 224/2016.