

NEWS MEDIA EUROPE

STATEMENT

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News Media Europe urges Dutch government to keep press products accessible to all

The European association of news publishers calls for the retention of the reduced VAT rate of 9% on daily newspapers, weeklies, magazines and electronic publications in the Netherlands. News Media Europe – representing over 2,700 news media across Europe – expresses its deep concern about the Dutch government’s plans to scrap the reduced VAT rate for press products, currently supporting millions of Dutch citizens and their democratic participation.

If adopted, The Netherlands will become an outlier in Europe. All European Member States recognize the position of independent journalism in a democratic society and therefore apply a reduced VAT rate, ranging from 0% to a maximum of 12%. In Denmark, Belgium, Ireland and the non-EU countries Norway and the UK, a 0% VAT rate applies, making journalism accessible to as many citizens as possible.

With a VAT rate of 21% on press products, the Netherlands will therefore be the only European Member State to create unnecessarily high barriers to access the free press through a very high VAT rate.

A weakened journalism sector has negative consequences for the rule of law. The intended VAT increase may lead to the loss of journalists’ jobs and could hamper a pluralistic media landscape in the country, and would undermine the watchdog function of the press. In times of increasing disinformation, this poses great risks to our democracy. Lower quality of news and information provision also damages trust in democratic institutions. With rising international tensions and a war on the European continent, independent quality journalism is essential.

We therefore urge the Dutch government to use the full freedom the European VAT Directive offers and continue to apply a reduced tax in support of independent journalism, as all other Member States do.

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