



## MANIFEST OF POLISH INTERNET PUBLISHERS

The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the time of the Internet. The dynamic development of technology results in rapidly progressing changes in various areas of the economy, including the media market. The legislator, trying to keep up with these processes, describes them and with help of legal provisions establishes limits for them. Unfortunately, by doing so, the legislator overreacts. Overly restrictive regulations not only cause slower development of new methods of reaching audiences, but often directly strike specific groups of entities. As Polish Internet publishers, at this very moment, we see at least a few European regulatory initiatives that constitute unjustified interference in the functioning of such a basic medium as the Internet.

One of them is the concept of the so-called “link tax”, limiting the freedom of hyperlinking press releases. It also strikes at the specificity of online media operations, in which free linking to materials from other websites is one of the ways of distributing and processing information for its own unique content. Proposals for new regulations in the field of privacy protection in electronic communications, if implemented in this form, will prevent the execution of the economic model, which is currently the basis of the vast majority of European online media. The discussion about penalties for distributing *fake news*, or proposals for more and more far-reaching penalisation of online hate speech, make us ask about the responsibility and liability of website owners for the content provided by their users. Even the definition of the phenomenon itself is problematic – what are *fake news* that so many politicians nowadays want to fight against with additional regulations? Where does justified criticism end and hate speech begins? Can the owner of a website be liable for a comment that one of its users posted on it? The answers given to these questions in the public debate often make us assume that a large part of political decision-makers would like to see regulations most radical in their essence. Being Polish Internet publishers, we believe that we definitely should oppose such an approach to these matters. Due to unreasonable and overly restrictive regulations, not only online portals as such will suffer, but also the level of freedom of speech and freedom of media in Europe will be affected in a negative manner. We do not see any reason why Internet media should be subject to additional restrictions. Especially since these are particularly online media, thanks to the unlimited possibilities offered by the Internet, that can create and provide new, innovative tools to meet the expectations of users.

We believe that the legislator’s role is to create a regulatory environment that will not only limit, but may even stimulate the development of a diverse, competitive, and innovative sector of media publishing. Citizens not only deserve access to high-quality information, but also have the right to choose between platforms – the regulator should not limit it to any extent.

Bearing in mind the above threats and in the best interest of the development of the media market in Poland, we established the Internet Publishers Forum as part of the Union of Entrepreneurs and

### Związek Przedsiębiorców i Pracodawców

Zarząd: Cezary Kaźmierczak – prezes, wiceprezisi: Tomasz Pruszczyński, Marcin Nowacki

ul. Nowy Świat 33, 00-029 Warszawa, email/ biuro@zpp.net.pl, tel/ 22 826 08 31, www.zpp.net.pl



Employers. Our primary goal is to fight for the free and open nature of the Internet. We want the access to online content to be as wide as possible. We strive for the development of the media market to serve all citizens, regardless of their material status and beliefs. We believe in pluralism, competition, and freedom of speech, and these are the values that we will promote in our Forum.

Signatories: **300Polityka.pl, Defence24.pl, tuPolska, tuŁódź.com, Salon24.pl, wp.pl, Spidersweb.pl**

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