

Research, analysis and opinion on international media law

Polish government moves to liquidate all state media

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Donald Tusk, Poland's new Prime Minister, announces liquidation of state media ahead of restructuring and full audit

Poland's new Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, has announced controversial plans to put the country's media into liquidation.

On 19 December, Culture Minister Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz took the country's public broadcaster, TVP, off air and dismissed the board of directors, as well as their supervisory boards, in a move accused of illegality.

The pro-EU coalition government has said liquidation plans are part of its pledge to restore impartiality to public media, and reduce rightwing bias.

However, opposition MPs from the Law and Justice (PiS) party condemned the

move, calling the TVP dismissals illegal, and responded with sit-in protests.

PiS lawmaker Joanna Lichocka stated in a post on X that 'Tusk's government is destroying the Polish media.' She added: 'This is an act which damages the state.'

In a statement posted on the same social media platform, Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz, Poland's Culture Minister, commented: 'Due to the decision of the President of the Republic of Poland to suspend financing of public media, I decided to put into liquidation the companies Telewizja Polska SA, Polskie Radio SA and Polska Agencja Prasowa SA.' ➤

China's regulator proposes online gaming restrictions

China's gaming regulator has proposed new rules to restrict the amount of time and money that players can spend on video games, in a move to limit compulsive and "irrational" behaviours.

The rules, announced on 22 December, ban companies from providing incentives that encourage people to play video games in a USD45 billion industry.

Under the proposed regulation, companies will be required to create warning messages to users who show compulsive playing behaviours. The new rules also include measures to protect user privacy and require game publishers to store their servers within China.

Following news of the regulation, shares in Tencent Holdings, the world's largest gaming company, dropped by 16 per cent while NetEase, its closest competitor, decreased by 25 per cent.

Steven Leung, Executive Director of Institutional Sales at broker UOB Kay Hian, in Hong Kong, commented: "It's not necessarily the regulation itself - it's the policy risk that's too high." He added: "People had thought this kind of risk should have been over and had started to look at fundamentals again. It hurts confidence a lot."

Among the new measures is one broadly expected to be welcomed by the industry. Regulators will be required to process game approvals within 60 days.

On the same day the proposals were released, regulators announced the approval of 40 new imported games. ■

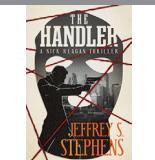
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News UK and DMG Media propose joint venture to combine printing operations

News UK and DMG Media have announced plans to combine printing operations 'to ensure a sustainable future for national newspaper printing'.

The proposed joint venture, announced on 03 October, will retain current printing sites in Hertfordshire, Merseyside as well as Eurocentral near Glasgow, but could lead to the closure of DMG Media sites in Thurrock and Dinnington.

The move by Rupert Murdoch's News UK and Lord Rothermere's DMG Media, if approved by competition regulators, could result in all national newspaper printing being under the remit of only two conglomerates.

Commenting on the deal, Darren Barker, Managing Director of Newsprinters UK, owned by News UK, said: "Millions of newspapers are printed and distributed across the UK every day, informing and entertaining millions of their loyal readers. But the reality is that print readership has been in decline for some years now, and the sector has come under increasing pressure to better align capacity with demand."

DMG Media Production Director, Julia Palmer-Pouche, explained: "The news industry has transformed and continues to change rapidly. DMG Media is at the forefront of this transformation." ■

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Mr Sienkiewicz continued: 'In the current situation, such action will ensure the continued operation of these companies, carry out the necessary restructuring and prevent layoffs of employees in the above-mentioned companies.'

The decision, which applies to all state media across TV, radio and news agencies, follows a decision by President Andrzej Duda, a PiS ally, to veto the new government's

bill relating to media funds provisioned for the Prime Minister's new version of public broadcaster TVP. The funding proposal amounted to PLN3 billion (USD770 million).

President Duda said the dismissals have caused "anarchy" by ignoring Polish media legislation passed by the PiS government, and called on the Tusk's government to comply with legal order.

Tusk said his Cabinet would submit

Media Freedom Act to protect journalists and media outlets

The European Commission has announced a political agreement between the European Parliament and the Council on Media Freedom Act, reached on 15 December.

The new rules provide 'unprecedented safeguards for journalists' and protect editorial independence, as well as guarantee transparency of ownership. The Act will also introduce right of media customisation.

According to a press release issued by the Commission, the agreement is subject to formal approval by both parties, and once approved, the regulation will be applicable to all Member States after 15 months.

A new independent European Board for Media Services will be set up under the Act. Among other things, the Board will coordinate measures relating to non-EU media that present a risk to public security.

The Act was proposed by the Commission in September 2022 and adopted by 448 votes in favour, 102 against and 75 abstentions on 03 October the following year.

Ahead of the vote, MEP Sabine Verheyen, commented: "We must not turn a blind eye to the worrying state of press freedom worldwide and in Europe."

She added: "With this bill, we reach an important legislative milestone to safeguard the diversity and freedom of our media landscape and our journalists and protect our democracies".

MEPs also want media organisations, including search engines, to report funds received from state advertising. ■

a revised bill that takes Duda's view into consideration, and moved funding from public media to children's healthcare.

Poland's state media has become the coalition government's first battleground.

'This is proof of the complete powerlessness of the authorities, who have not found any legal way to change the authorities in these companies,' Marcin Mastalerek, Secretary of State, wrote on X. ■

{ Best-selling author Jeffrey S. Stephens publishes new book, *The Handler*

Successful Private Practice Attorney Launches *The Handler*

Jeffrey S. Stephens



Success Jeffrey S. Stephens is the author of first-place award-winning novel, *Fool's Errand*

Hero stories are as old as humankind, and they serve a valuable purpose: "They inspire us to action, promote personal growth ... and they provide a salve for psychic wounds."

So wrote Scott T. Allison and George R. Goethals in their series called The Heroic Leadership Dynamic. And given the horrific wars raging now, the world could use a good salve for psychic wounds.

Author Jeffrey Stephens offers a pair of heroes in his new book, *The Handler*, but like any good thriller, his heroes will have to survive many challenges if they are to come out on top.

Three American scientists have been kidnapped in Pakistan, and an ISIS "handler" is believed to be using information coerced from them to plan a series of terrorist attacks in the United States.

When the CIA uncovers details of a violent assault planned in New York City, clandestine operative Nicholas Reagan and his partner, Carol Gellos, are assigned to prevent it.

The man behind this onslaught is further along in his preparations than anyone in the intelligence community anticipated.

After deciphering the code being used by the Handler to plot his bloody scheme, Reagan races against time, needing help as never before from his group of talented associates, including his lover, top CIA analyst Erin David.

The thriller likely will appeal to fans of the action-packed stories in the Jason Bourne and James Bond film and book franchises.

In her Midwest Book Review, Diane C. Donovan wrote this about *The Handler*: "The intrigue and suspense are well-developed

and grab reader interest and attention; but also noteworthy is the contrasting belief systems and motivations that keep both sides convinced that their actions support a higher purpose. ...

The Handler uses three attacks as pivot points for a social, religious, and political examination suitable for thriller libraries and discussion groups interested in examining the foundations of societal violence.

It's especially recommended as a 'wolf in sheep's clothing' read for those who anticipate a well-delivered entertainment value in a thriller, but who will find that the issues raised between characters and ideals provide satisfying bigger-picture thinking about the origins and enactment of division."

Now available from Stephens is another timely story in his sequel to *The Handler*, *The Enemies Among Us*. ■

Jeffrey S. Stephens is a successful attorney in private practice.

He is the author of the Jordan Sandor thrillers, *Targets of Deception*, *Targets of Opportunity*, *Targets of Revenge* and *Rogue Mission*, as well as the Anthony Walker murder mystery *Crimes and Passion* and the Pencraft first-place award-winning novel, *Fool's Errand*

For more information about the author, visit <https://jeffreystephens.com>.

The Handler

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