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Ref. Investments in Media groups in Portugal without AML-CFT controls

Dear President Ursula Von der Leyen
and dear Commissioners

I bring to your attention three articles published in a recent edition of weekly newspaper “Expresso”, dated March 12th, under the titles:

1. “Dos cruzeiros às tintas se fazem os novos donos dos media” (translation: “From cruises to paint, here come the new media owners”)
<http://leitor.expresso.pt/semanario/semanario2524/html/economia/temas/dos-cruzeiros-as-tintas-se-fazem-os-novos-donos-dos-media>
2. “Quem são os donos da Media Capital” (translation: “Who are the owners of Media Capital”)
3. “Marco Galinha e a Global Media: “Estamos bem intencionados” (translation: “Marco Galinha and the Global Media: we have good intentions”)
<http://leitor.expresso.pt/semanario/semanario2524/html/economia/temas/marco-galinha-e-a-global-media-estamos-bem-intencionados>

The articles raise a number of concerns regarding several people who are now associating to exercise control of the media group Media Capital, which owns dozens of local radios and the TV Channels TVI and TVI 24. And another group targetting the media group Global Media, which owns radio TSF, newspapers “Diario de Notícias”, “Jornal de Notícias”, among others.

The concerns result from the fact that, despite not yet given final agreement by ERC, the Portuguese media regulator, these people and entities are already controlling the said media groups. And that without proper anti-money laundering controls on the origin of the investments having been conducted by the responsible authorities. Yet, several media reports suggest the final approval for those investments may be close.

“Expresso” notes that none of the concerned people or entities have any particular background and experience in the media sector, despite being ready to invest a lot in a no so lucrative sector these days.

Also, the media note that people in the shareholders structure of Media Capital have been involved in judicial investigations: for money laundering and company fraudulent failure, Mr Avelino Gaspar.

And the main shareholder, Mr. Mário Ferreira, is under judicial investigation for the purchase and sale of ship “Atlântida” (Processo 19/14.4TELSB). Attached you will find a letter I have sent to the Portuguese and European authorities in 2017 regarding the sale and resale of the ship “Atlântida” by Mr. Mario Ferreira.

<https://www.anagomes.eu/PublicDocs/902e21d5-c83d-4ac2-bc6c-da2255277b24.pdf>

Mr. Mario Ferreira owns cruise companies, hotels, a floating casino (n/m “World Explorer” registered in the MAR shipping registry of the Free Zone of Madeira, and now, also, a private jet company.

Global Media group is to have as a main shareholder the fund KNJ Investments, owned by Chinese citizens, apart from other investors with no relation with the sector.

I have been informed that ERC has tried to exercise its obligations and scrutinize the investing companies and individuals, but has met with refusal by the Tax Authority to provide it with information on the tax compliance and probity of those entities and individuals, invoking protection of privacy and personal data!

CMVM, on the other hand, does not seem eager or able to exercise its supervision, except perfunctorily, as one of the close collaborators of Mr. Mário Ferreira in charge of actually controlling Media Capital is Mr. Manuel Alves Monteiro, who is a former staff member with privileged access and influence in CMVM.

I point out to you that the move to put Mr. Mário Ferreira as a main investor and controller of Media Capital was negotiated and steered by lawyer Mr. Diogo Lacerda Machado, who is a member of the board of MysticGroup / Pluris Investment, investment vehicles of Mr. Mário Ferreira. Mr. Machado is also publicly known in Portugal as a personal friend of Prime Minister Antonio Costa, who has put him in charge of negotiations involving State assets, such as the public participation in air company TAP.

I do not need to stress the crucial importance of transparency and accountability in the ownership of media groups, not just in view of preventing violation the Anti Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism 5th Directive, but also to ensure independence of the media to counter organized desinformation.

I will be sending copy of this letter to the attention of relevant Portuguese authorities and to the attention of EP, FATC, OECD and GRECO.

Best regards,

Ana Gomes
Former MEP (2004-2019)

