**From:** PUBB UK < >

**Subject: Re: Sandoz & Novartis Group social responsibility - placing of advertisements on Belarusian State Television**

**Date:** 8 August 2021 at 11:58:20 BST

**To:** richard.saynor@sandoz.com

**Cc:** francisco.ballester@sandoz.com, martin.mischof@sandoz.com, pierluigi.antonelli@sandoz.com, business.practicesofficer@novartis.com, < >@belarusabroad.org, < >@gmail.com, < >@belarusabroad.org

Dear Mr Saynor

We refer to our below request which remains unaddressed so far.

The placement of ads on Belarusian TV by European and American companies is now attracting the attention of [media](https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=auto&tl=en&u=https://www.dw.com/ru/pravozashhitniki-zapadnye-korporacii-finansirujut-propagandu-lukashenko/a-58751449) and [social networks](https://twitter.com/andersostlund/status/1423200561474777090) where Sandoz Group is named (and shamed) as being an important partner of the propaganda tool of the Belarusian regime. Also, at the end of June, [EUvsDisinfo](https://euvsdisinfo.eu/about/) (the EU cell dedicated to strategic communication to Eastern Europe) devoted a specific publication to the fact that [Belarusian television fuels hate](https://euvsdisinfo.eu/disinformation-fuels-hate-on-belarusian-tv/).

We request you to reconsider Sandoz / Novartis Group stance in this matter (as per our message below) as the current situation is not in line with Novartis Group ethical standards and is hugely detrimental to its reputation.

Yours sincerely,

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**P**rofessional **U**nion of **B**elarusians in **B**ritain

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[www.pubb.uk](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.pubb.org.uk%2F&data=04%7C01%7Civana.blazanovic%40normagroup.com%7C5c26ba517abd40ec8bb408d93a3f486f%7C458226210c354772b6100387c186eeba%7C0%7C0%7C637604865870256054%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=hFYbNwXjhbTgVjcIYbX0k%2Bz72AtATr%2FJKXqxWWII9ts%3D&reserved=0)

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On 26 Jul 2021, at 18:24, PUBB UK wrote:

Dear Mr Saynor

We, the Professional Union of Belarusians in Britain (PUBB), the People’s Embassy of Belarus in the UK and the Belarusian Community Group "Nadzeya" are reaching out to you regarding the placing of a television advertisement for Sandoz on Belarusian State Television.

We urge you to abstain from placing further advertisements on Belarusian TV channels. Indeed, Belarusian state television is a propaganda tool used to distort the truth, intimidate the population and support the illegitimate regime and state terrorism:

* The highjacking of the Ryanair civilian plane on 23 May was called the “salvation of Europe'' by the ONT channel. The broadcasting of Roman Protasevich’s “confessions” and also the “interviews” were clearly conducted under duress and amounts to complicity in torture according to international legal practice. As early as November 2020, the political prisoner, Mikalai Dziadok, was shown on Belarusian state television and forced to make a confession of guilt visibly under torture. Numerous other opponents of the regime are regularly forced to confess their guilt on Belarusian state television.
* On 1st of June 2021, the  [European Broadcasting Union (EBU) expelled Belteleradio](https://wiwibloggs.com/2021/06/30/belarus-ebu-expels-belarus-broadcaster-btrc-not-eligible-for-eurovision/265914/) in view of concerns regarding the public Belarusian broadcaster’s ability to uphold the EBU core values of freedom of expression, independence and accountability.
* The [chairman](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=OJ:L:2020:426I:FULL&from=EN) and [vice chair of Belteleradio are both on the EU sanctions list](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32021R0997&from=EN) because respectively “... *he is responsible for the dissemination of state propaganda in public media and continues to support the Lukashenka regime. … he also fired striking employees of Belteleradio Company under his management, thereby making him responsible for human rights violations*” and “*... has been willingly providing the Belarusian public with false information about the outcome of elections, protests and the repressions perpetrated by the state authorities...*“
* There is ample evidence of violations of workers' rights on Belarusian state television: pressure, intimidation, dismissals for participating in strikes and protests (see above quotes from the EU Regulations).
* The situation of media freedom in Belarus has been alarming for many years. In the Reporters Without Borders press freedom ranking, Belarus is ranked 158 out of 180 countries. On 18 May 2021, the most popular independent Belarusian website TUT.BY was shut down. Further crackdown on independent media took place on the 16th of July when [21 reporters were raided](https://www.euronews.com/2021/07/16/belarus-expands-opposition-crackdown-with-raids-on-independent-media) and the authorities also broke down the door of the RadioFreeEurope/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) Minsk bureau.  According to the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ), 32 Belarusian journalists are currently in custody, either serving their sentences or awaiting trial, including 12 TUT.BY staff and 5 Press Club Belarus staff. On 21 July, the BAJ itself was subject to a [lawsuit seeking its closure](https://baj.by/en/content/baj-set-appeal-justice-ministrys-warning-used-reason-its-possible-closure) by the justice ministry for  failure to stop alleged violations of regulations.

We note that under its [Human Rights Guidelines of Novartis Group](https://www.novartis.com/sites/www.novartis.com/files/novartis-human-rights-guideline.pdf) "we must use appropriate standards and processes to make sure that we are not complicit in human rights abuses within our sphere of influence". We kindly invite you to consider if continuing cooperation with a propaganda tool of "illegitimate, illegal and criminal" (these are the actual terms from the [EU Parliament Resolution](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2021-0328_EN.html)) regime is compatible with Novartis Group ethical standards and the above commitment?

We are confident that Sandoz and Novartis Group highly values ​​their reputation and the risks that they incur from prolonging cooperation with Belarusian broadcaster are incommensurate with the reputational and eventual financial damage. There are several additional considerations for cutting ties with the Belarusian state TV:

1. Public refusal to cooperate with the Belarusian state television will help you win the sympathy of an audience that does not watch Belarusian TV. Such news will be published in independent media, telegram channels, social networks and will create a positive image of your company among opponents of the illegitimate government, as can be seen from the example of the [Nivea, Skoda](https://translate.google.com/translate?sl=ru&tl=en&u=https://charter97.org/ru/news/2021/1/16/407818/) and [Liqui-Moly](https://belsat.eu/en/news/liqui-moly-to-not-sponsor-hockey-world-cup-if-it-takes-place-in-belarus/) brands, which refused to sponsor the World Ice Hockey Championship in Minsk.

2. [Only 15% of the country's population trusts](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/2021-06-14-belarusians-views-political-crisis.pdf) the state television. More than half of Belarusians prefer to receive information from independent media, social networks and telegram channels.

3. The negative attitude towards pro-government television extends to the companies that cooperate with it, including advertisers. Advertising of Nestlé products, which interrupted the so-called "interview" of Protasevich, triggered indignation of Belarusians and world audience,  an [open letter from over 50 NGOs](https://freedomhouse.org/article/nestle-must-immediately-stop-funding-state-media-belarus) and [its shaming in the leading German publications](https://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/unternehmen/warum-nestle-fuer-sein-handeln-in-belarus-kritisiert-wird-17408163.html), after which [Nestlé announced a significant reduction of its advertising budget](https://www.rnd.de/politik/belarus-nestle-wegen-tv-werbung-in-der-kritik-folteropfer-und-schokoriegel-QMK6V6NHMZHJHJ2HBDGUSR6PJY.html) in Belarus.

4. Presumably your company made a decision to place advertisements based on audience analysis provided by [Mediameter («Медиаизмеритель»)](https://mediameter.by/), Realnoe Izmerenie («Реальное измерение») or MediaMetrix. There are reasons to believe that these companies are not only involved in corruption schemes, but also [provide inaccurate information about the TV viewing](https://aro.by/2021/06/01/%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B3-%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B4%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2-2/) indicators in Belarus.

5. Further its expulsion from EBU, it is highly likely that the Belarusian state channels will be deprived of the right to broadcast the summer Olympics, which will significantly affect the TV viewing indicators and reduce the effectiveness of advertising.

We are sending similar requests to all major advertisers in Belarus, including Nestlé, Jacobs, Mars and Henkel and trust that Sandoz & Novartis Group will be a champion of acting up to their affirmed ethical standards.

Please keep us informed on your group’s decision. We are looking forward to hearing from you. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to us (< >, PUBB, < > + < >) should you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

< >, coordinator, Professional Union of Belarusians in Britain (PUBB)

< >, coordinator, People's Embassy of Belarus in the United Kingdom

Belarusian Community Group "Nadzeya", signed collectively