

Brussels, 22 May 2024

In defence of French public service media against a dangerous reform

UNI Media, Entertainment and Arts, representing more than 140 unions and guilds and over 500,000 workers worldwide, rises in support of French trade unions against a dangerous reform threatening, by merging all companies of the audiovisual public sector, to weaken the independence, quality and sustainability of French public service media.

We declare our solidarity with our French colleagues from the CGT, FO and CFTD who are calling for a joint strike on 23 and 24 May at the Institut national de l'audiovisuel, France Médias Monde, France Télévisions and Radio France to denounce with one voice the project of reform.

Our democratic societies in Europe need strong public broadcasting services to preserve pluralism, develop cultural diversity, ensure access to a universal service and inclusive participation of all citizens. French public broadcasting plays an important role worldwide. Its quality is recognized and a point of reference beyond the French-speaking world. Its commitment to cross-border cooperation and production, and between different cultures and languages, helps to build bridges between peoples.

Weakening public broadcasting means weakening the commitment to a pluralistic, diverse, inclusive and outward-looking media ecosystem. In a world dominated by powerful multinationals that reduce public space and favour the development of the mainstream, and sometimes even of fake news and/or extreme discourse, public broadcasting is an actor that guarantees a space accessible to all citizens for the expression of voices, stories and themes that reflect the diversity of our societies.

Over the past few years, successive governments in France have weakened the editorial independence and financial sustainability of French public broadcasting by multiplying budget cuts, imposing forced mergers, abolishing the licence fee model and by calling into question the scope of its public media mission.

The amendment of the finance law of 16 August 2022 led to the abolition of the public broadcasting licence. To date, no stable replacement solution has been found to ensure long-term funding.

The current project of reform risks to undermine even further the independence of the French public service, destabilizing teams and disrupting work organization. The reform casts uncertainty and anxiety over a workforce that has undergone multiple reforms and restructurings and that faces a deterioration of working conditions if the new reform project goes ahead.

Instead of investing in the skills and commitment of public broadcasting workers, the government is ignoring their call for a sound investment in the future, to augment the broadcasters' digital reach, to enlarge the offer for young citizens and to equip them with sufficient means to fight disinformation.

We support the demands from the French trade unions and call on decision makers:

- ✓ To withdraw all holding and/or merger plans concerning public broadcasting companies.
- ✓ To ensure sustainable and dynamic funding for the public broadcasting service, guaranteeing both its independence and the resources needed to carry out its many missions.
- ✓ To ensure the continuation of conventional cover for employees as a minimum basis for any developments.