

Brussels, 27 May 2022

For a strong VRT - Public Service Broadcasting for Citizens

The broadcasting workers and their media and entertainment unions affiliated to UNI Global Union stand in solidarity with our colleagues of the Flemish public broadcaster VRT, who are facing another round of restructuring and lay-offs.

The policy of the Flemish government that is planning to further reduce VRT's annual budget is a disservice to citizens and shows a profound disrespect for the public service broadcasting workers who have made VRT one of the most productive, cost-efficient, and creative broadcaster in Europe. The Flemish government announced to reduce the budget from 275 million euros to 258 million euros in 2025. Further, the government will not index the operating costs, which will result in a structural deficit that will grow each year. The cuts come at a time, when VRT needs to invest in the digitalization and faces increased costs due to high inflation.

The response of VRT management is a sell-out. Instead of engaging in a dialogue with the government over a sustainable financing plan for VRT and to invest in its workers and the digital transformation of the broadcaster, it has decided to cut over 200 jobs, to privatize core services including one of its most successful shows, "*thuis*".

We join the workers at VRT and their unions, ACOD, ACV Transcom and VSOA in their call to reinvest in VRT, to keep productions and core services in-house and to make the digital transformation a sustainable process investing in the training and capacity building of its workforce.

We support their strike action on 31 May and call on all unions to support our colleagues at VRT in their campaign for a strong VRT, that invest in people, offers dignified and sustainable employment, and provides quality public broadcasting for citizens.

We call on the Flemish government to recommit to the value of public service broadcasting as a service of and for citizens. The VRT needs a future proof budget that takes into account indexation, the need to invest in the digital transformation including proper and structural training and long-life learning opportunities for the workforce.

Strong public service broadcasting means quality programming and independent information, which democratic societies draw their strength from. Demolishing the financial substance of VRT and outsourcing its programming weakens our democracy.

For a strong VRT!