

Joint Opinion by the EU Audiovisual Sector Social Dialogue Committee

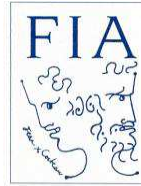
'The position of public service media in Greece'

The EU Audiovisual Sector Social Dialogue Committee (AVSDC) expresses profound dismay at reports that the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) has been shut down. We call upon the Greek Prime Minister, Antonis Samaras to immediately reverse this decision. We further call on the European Commission to use its powers within its competences to support the continuation of all the components of public service media in Greece – the ‘cradle of democracy’.

The audiovisual sector is both a practical resource and a primary source of information, culture and entertainment across the EU. Because of this it has a special significance in the protection and promotion of fundamental freedoms and democracy across the member states of the EU. The co-existence of public and commercial organisations serves to create a diverse range of programming. It contributes to media pluralism, cultural and linguistic diversity, editorial competition as well as freedom of expression and the public’s right to information. It acts as a public watchdog as confirmed by the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights adding that this task “cannot be successfully accomplished unless it is grounded in the principle of pluralism, of which the State is the ultimate guarantor. This observation is especially valid in relation to audio-visual media, whose programmes are often broadcast very widely.”¹

The audiovisual sector provides the people of Europe with radio, television, film and online content, and the cultural, social and economic value of this content is an important contributor to the development of European societies, economies and cultural diversity. Public service media are an essential pillar of democratic and pluralistic societies across Europe. The requirement of independence from political interference is fundamental. Public broadcasters are there to serve the public - not a particular government, political party, business or any other special interest group.

¹ ECHR, 24.11.1993, Appl. no. [13914/88](#) et alt. “Lentia ./ Austria”.



Public broadcasters also have the remit to respect corporate social responsibility values and apply high professional standards for its staff.

The core values of public service media are universality, independence, excellence, diversity, accountability and innovation. It is essential to respect the public/private dual structure of the audiovisual European landscape. To do their job properly, organisations within the audiovisual sector need an appropriate legal framework, adequate sustainable funding, well qualified staff and professional governance to safeguard editorial independence.

The AVSDC unequivocally support the resolution passed in the European Parliament in May 2012, which stated that “press and media freedom are hallmarks of a democratic society.”² It is vital for the democratic values held dear in the countries of the EU that the audiovisual sector, both public and commercial, remains vibrant and healthy.

The Social Partners acknowledge the difficult situation which Greece finds itself in at the moment, but the action concerning ERT is contrary to the values enshrined within the European Social Model. The existence of public service media and their independence from government lie at the heart of democratic societies. We urge the Greek government to fulfil its duties to ensure pluralism and to respect the independence of the media. We also urge the EU Institutions to address this serious issue as a matter of urgency, to work to preserve and develop the public broadcasting media and protect its workforce in Greece and across the EU.

This declaration is made at the AVSDC meeting on 17 June 2013.

Audiovisual Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee
17 June 2013

² "Report with recommendations to the Commission on the amendment of Regulation (EC) No 864/2007 on the law applicable to non-contractual obligations (Rome II) (2009/2170(INI))" - this report is available here: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-%2f%2fEP%2f%2fNONGML%2bREPORT%2ba7-2012-0152%2b0%2bDOC%2bPDF%2bV0%2f%2fEN>