

SC candidate 2019: Sofia Branco

Candidate as member of the Steering Committee

Sofia Branco, Portugal
SinJor



Dear Fellows,

I have presented my candidacy to be a member of the EFJ Steering Committee, for which I ask your support.

I have been leading the Portuguese Union **Sindicato dos Jornalistas** since 2015, while working in the news agency newsroom, coordinating internships and professional training.

As president of a board of 6 women and 6 men, I present myself as a feminist candidate and I commit my action, if elected, to the principle of gender equality and equal opportunities for all. I will engage in making this subject cross-cutting in EFJ words and actions.

I am also presenting myself in the name of a renewed Union, with an average age around 40s, typical workers and freelancers, where people with less experience also contribute with different approaches. We have been attracting young affiliates, though slowly, and we do believe we have to, together, find ways to motivate younger Journalists to be unionized.

Without forgetting the fundamental core of Unions – unemployment and precariousness, collective agreements, freelancer rights... –, Unions must be more involved with the society. We have done so, launching a successful media literacy project, that has already trained 100 teachers on the ground, and involving Journalists in the campaign #ThistimeImvoting, with a video pledging for the vote on next European elections (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HUrcti5MFI>).

We also believe we are at a point where we need to distinguish Journalism from other types of content and Journalists from bloggers, influencers and whoever else is communicating – but not doing Journalism.

To do all this, we need a more open and inclusive EFJ, that facilitates European partnerships and share of good practices among its members, and that is more active in newsrooms, working directly with and for Journalists.

I am looking forward to having this opportunity to give voice to Journalists and I commit to do so listening to the proposals of all.

Lisbon, 3rd of May 2019,

Sofia Branco

CANDIDATE STATEMENT

Journalists, as citizens with special rights and duties, have an increased responsibility to promote citizenship and democratic participation, in a time when disinformation has

acquired a viral dimension and uncontrollable speed, in which a part of citizens seems to prefer to be fed only with ideas similar to yours, reinforcing convictions, instead of being questioned by the healthy confrontation of perspectives. And like this fertilizing the ground for populist, nationalist and xenophobic ideas.

We do not even need to leave the European Union to talk about attacks on freedom of the press. Let us not forget - we don't forget - the recent deaths of three journalists who investigated corruption, nor the impunity of their perpetrators:

Viktoria Marinova, Bulgaria, 2018

Ján Kuciak, Slovakia, 2018

Daphne Caruana Galizia, Malta, 2017

Let us not forget the regimes in power in countries like Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic ... whose political leaders are authors of unprecedented threats to journalism. And, opening up to the European continent, let us not forget also the recurrent violations in Russia and Turkey, where one also dies in the name of freedom of the press. EFJ has done a lot, but it has to do more. We cannot let them forget.

In 2018, Reporters Without Borders warned: "The traditionally safe environment for journalists in Europe has begun to deteriorate." In the last report, they already ask: "Has a dam burst in Europe?", stating that "Europe continues to be the continent that best guarantees press freedom, but the work of its investigative reporters is being obstructed more and more."

It is our duty - of journalists, but also of any citizen committed to continuing to live in democracy and freedom - to interrupt the current course of things. Put journalism in its place - to mediate, verify, scrutinize. To help us read the world, through a panoply of looks.

Journalism is a public good, regardless of whether it is provided by public or private.

The existence of a free and independent press is the essence of democracy. And, therefore, the public policies for media have to assume that journalism plays a relevant social role of scrutiny, vigilance and guarantee of pluralism and diversity, accuracy and quality.

EFJ needs to be a more active voice, more present in newsrooms and on the ground – where Journalists are. I am presenting my candidacy for the EFJ Steering Committee to be a part of that effort.