

## Resolutions and statements adopted by the EFJ Annual Meeting (AM) Prishtina, Kosovo - 23-24 May 2024

### ON MEDIA FREEDOM

#### 1. **On the immediate release of Ukrainian journalists illegally detained by the Russian Federation**

*Tabled by NUJU (Ukraine)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> May 2024 in Prishtina, notes that at least 28 media workers and citizen journalists are in captivity as a result of illegal detentions, captures, false accusations, and falsified “trials” of the Russian occupiers in the territory of Ukraine.

Many journalists have been charged or given sentences that are not commensurate with their journalistic duty, which they continued to perform under the conditions of Russian occupation. The lack of confirmation of their detention from the Russian authorities and/or information about their current location makes it impossible to monitor the conditions of detention of media workers.

Illegally detained journalists are deprived not only of the right to work, but also of the legal protection defined by the European Convention on Human Rights. In some cases, journalists were or are being subjected to torture, threats (including threats against their relatives), pressure and constant humiliation of their dignity. Our colleagues in places of captivity do not receive proper medical care.

According to international law, journalists in the war zone are civilians, they cannot be captured and included in prisoner exchange lists. Media representatives must be unconditionally released. But the Russian Federation, which despises international law, refuses to release illegally detained journalists and uses these cases to blackmail and intimidate independent professional and civil Ukrainian journalists in the occupied territories.

#### **The EFJ Annual Meeting appeals:**

#### **The European Commission, the governments of European countries:**

- to increase diplomatic and sanctions pressure on the authorities of the Russian Federation for the immediate release of all illegally persecuted Ukrainian journalists;
- to initiate the creation of an international mechanism for the release of Ukrainian professional and civil journalists as civilians illegally detained by the Russian Federation;
- together with other international institutions and humanitarian missions, to take measures to search for location information of Ukrainian journalists who have gone missing in the occupied territory.

### **Global leadership team of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies:**

- to check the conditions of detention of all Ukrainian professional and civil journalists illegally detained by the Russian Federation; provide them with guaranteed access to medical care and make a public report.

### **Members of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ):**

- to express solidarity with imprisoned Ukrainian journalists by spreading information about these cases in coordination with the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine.

### **The Annual Meeting instructs the EFJ Steering Committee:**

- to apply directly to the relevant bodies and institutions of the European Union or the relevant governments of European countries on the issues raised;
- to promptly submit proposals for submitting cases of illegally detained journalists to the Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists to draw attention and ensure a response to such cases.

## **2. On Spanish reporter Pablo González Yagüe, detained in Poland since 28 February 2022**

*Tabled by FAPE, FeSP, CCOO and UGT (Spain)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23rd-24th May 2024 in Prishtina, notes that reporter journalist Pablo González Yagüe has been imprisoned for two years and three months in a prison in Poland, a member state of the European Union.

Since his arrest on February 28, 2022, Polish authorities have not specified the details that would justify said detention, except for a vague accusation of "espionage."

Publicly, there has been hardly any information, nor a public and logical development of the judicial process. Formally, he continues to be in 'preventive detention' which the prosecution - according to the judge - has simply extended nine times, that is, on a quarterly basis. During the first period of Pablo González's imprisonment, his lawyers were unable to have access to the precise details on which the formal accusation against the detainee would be based. Pablo González is still now in Radom prison, a hundred kilometers from Warsaw. He has spent most of his long period of stay in prison in conditions of extreme isolation, with barely an hour out to the yard and great limitations when it comes to receiving correspondence. A good part of the letters that are sent to him are returned to their recipients. During these two years and three months in prison, the mother of his children and her family, residing in Euskadi, northern region in Spain, have only been able to visit him twice.

Together with the Galician photojournalist Juan Teixeira, he has worked as a freelance reporter for years for very diverse media (La Sexta, Público, the EFE agency, GARA, Voice of America, etc.). He specializes in Slavic cultures, a topic on which he is preparing a doctorate. He has reported on the ground from the armed conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Crimea, Donbas and Ukraine. At the time he was detained he was on Polish territory reporting on the arrival of Ukrainian refugees to Poland.

Pablo González was born in Moscow and has dual nationality, Spanish and Russian because his father is Russian, while his mother is a descendant of the so-called children of the Spanish war, children of republicans welcomed in Russia during the Spanish civil war. The consular visits that he has received are few, with a frequency that does not reach monthly. Opacity about the case has been predominant, although there have been several parliamentary questions in the Congress of Deputies in Madrid and in the European Parliament. The Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs also emerged from the almost total silence on the case – which characterized him during the first two years – and told the Congress of Deputies that he had demanded from the new Polish government “an oral, adversarial and public trial as soon as possible.”

The EFJ Annual Meeting instructs the EFJ Steering Committee:

- to request from the Polish authorities the immediate release of Pablo González. It is not tolerable that a country of the European Union has an information professional imprisoned, with absolute opacity about the precise charges against him, after 27 months of imprisonment and incommunicado.
- to demand to the judicial authorities of Poland maximum transparency in the process they are pursuing against Pablo González and – in the shortest possible time – the rapid holding of a fair trial with all the guarantees, in the face of the accusations and alleged evidence that could be provided. against him. According to European legislation, there is even the possibility of his repatriation to Spain while awaiting the final trial.
- to call on the Spanish authorities to maintain a more decisive attitude towards the Polish government, the same as in European bodies, as various human rights NGOs, unions and journalist organizations from Spain and other countries have been demanding, as well as the International Federation of Journalists. The EFJ AM demands verifiable respect for his rights as a Spanish and European Union citizen.

## **ON JOURNALISTS' SAFETY**

### **3. On Investigations into murders of journalists in Kosovo**

*Tabled by the EFJ SC*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> May 2024 in Prishtina,

Noting that it has been 26 years since the start of a series of murders, kidnappings and disappearances of 19 journalists and media professionals who had worked for media in the Serbian and Albanian languages and for the German Stern magazine, and that no one has been brought to justice for these crimes committed between 1998 and 2005;

Stressing, with concern, that nothing has been done to bring those responsible for these crimes to justice, even after the European Federation of Journalists resolutions adopted in 2018 (in Lisbon) and 2021 (in Zagreb), which call for efficient investigations into these crimes;

Faced with the fact that no investigations were launched even after the information on these crimes was published on the Council of Europe Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists in 2018 and updated in 2023;

Pointing out the positive experience in the forming of and the results achieved by the Commission for Investigating Murders of Journalists which the Government of Serbia formed in 2012 and thanks to which, among other things, the indictment for the murder of journalist Slavko Ćuruvija was raised;

Stressing that investigation of the murders, abductions and disappearances of journalists and media professionals was under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which had executive authority from 1999 to 2008;

Recalling that in 2008 the responsibility was passed on to the European Union's EULEX mission but that these crimes have not been solved to date;

Keeping in mind that fighting the impunity of crimes against journalists and media professionals is key and fundamentally important for seeing justice done, but also necessary for further protection of media professionals, as well as that bringing the individuals responsible for those crimes to justice is a key element in preventing future attacks,

The EFJ Annual Meeting asks the EFJ Steering Committee:

1. To request that UNMIK, EULEX and the authorities in Kosovo form an International Commission of Experts that would help in investigating the murders, kidnappings and disappearances of journalists and media professionals in Kosovo in the period from 1998 to 2005:

- the disappearance of journalist Ismail Berbatovci when he went on a journalism assignment on July 23, 1998;
- the disappearance of Djuro Slavuj and Ranko Perenić, the journalists' team of Radio Prishtina, on a journalism assignment near Velika Hoča on August 21, 1998;
- the kidnapping of journalist Nebojša Radošević and photographer Vladimir Dobričić while they were on an assignment, near Prishtina on October 18, 1998;
- the murder of journalist Afrim Maliqi in Prishtina on December 2, 1998;
- the murder of journalist and head of the Kosovo Information Center (KIC) Enver Maloku in Prishtina on January 11, 1999;
- the disappearance of Ljubomir Knežević, a correspondent of Serbian national newspaper Politika and journalist of Prishtina daily Jedinstvo, in Vučitrn on May 6, 1999;
- the murder of two Stern journalists, Gabriel Gruener and Volker Kraemer, and translator Senol Alit near Prizren on June 13, 1999;
- the murder of Aleksandar "Sima" Simović, a journalist of Media Action International, in Prishtina on August 21, 1999;
- the murder of Krist Gegaj, an editor at RTV Prishtina, in Istok on September 12, 1999;
- the murder of Momir Stokuća, a photojournalist, in Prishtina on September 21, 1999;
- the disappearance of Marjan Melonashi, a journalist of the Serbian section of Radio Kosovo, in Prishtina on September 9, 2000;
- the murder of Shefki Popova, a journalist of the Rilindja newspaper, in Vučitrn on September 10, 2000;
- the murder of Xhemal Mustafa, a journalist of the Bota Sot daily, in Prishtina on November 23, 2000;

- the murder of Bekim Kastrati, a Bota Sot journalist, near Prishtina on October 19, 2001;
- the murder of Bardhyl Ajeti, a journalist and columnist of Bota Sot, who was shot near Gnjilane on June 3, 2005, and died on June 25, 2005.

2. To request that experts – judges and prosecutors from Belgrade and Prishtina, representatives of international missions who were in charge of the rule of law in Kosovo in the aforementioned period (UNMIK and EULEX) and of journalists’ associations – all the EFJ affiliates in the region, including Serbia, Kosovo and Albania – be included in the work of an International Commission of Experts for the investigations into the murders, kidnappings and disappearances of journalists and media professionals in Kosovo in the period from 1998 to 2005.

3. To engage, in cooperation with the members, in creating conditions for the forming of an international commission for investigating these crimes.

4. To request that prosecutors’ offices from Belgrade and Prishtina cooperate directly or with the mediation of partners trusted by both sides, in investigating the murders and kidnappings of journalists and media professionals in Kosovo in the period from 1998 to 2005, as well as that they regularly inform the public of the results;

5. To request that the Kosovo Specialist Chambers launch investigations into the cases of journalists and media professionals who were murdered or went missing in Kosovo between 1998 and 2005;

6. To request that the United Nations implement the conclusions of the UN Human Rights Advisory Panel (HRAP), published in the period from 2008 to 2016, in which HRAP notes violations of the European Convention on Human Rights in UNMIK’s work (HRAP asked for the solving of cases of murders and kidnappings of journalists and media professionals in the period when UNMIK was responsible for investigating crimes);

7. To request that the United Nations indemnify the victims’ families and inform the public about it.

8. To request that the EULEX mission and the EU Council of Ministers, under whose auspices is the EULEX’s mandate, publicly state why efficient investigations into the murders, kidnappings and disappearances of journalists and media professionals in the period from 1998 to 2005 were not conducted during its rule of law executive mandate.

9. To request that the EU, which took on the obligation of acting in line with international resolutions, fully respect this Resolution and contribute to investigations into the murders and disappearances of journalists and media professionals in Kosovo, as well as inform the IFJ, the EFJ and the public of the steps taken.

The Annual Meeting calls on the EFJ Steering Committee to regularly, in collaboration with other organizations, associations, the Council of Europe, the United Nations, and the OSCE, follow investigations into these murders, kidnappings and disappearances and inform the public about the matter.

#### **4. On Gaza**

*Tabled by SNJ, SNJ-CGT and CFDT-Journalistes (France)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23rd-24th May 2024 in Prishtina condemns the deadly attacks on civilians, including journalists, from October 7th 2023 and the start of the war.

The EFJ notes with indignation that, in contradiction with obligations under international law - in particular, the obligation to provide protection to civilian populations - more than a hundred journalists and media professionals have perished in the war operations carried out by the Israeli army in Gaza or on the border with Lebanon. The Israeli forces have been accused of deliberately targeting some of these journalists.

At the EFJ annual meeting in Prishtina (Kosovo), representatives of journalists' unions from all over Europe praised the work and courage of Palestinian journalists who are risking their lives to provide vital information on the ongoing conflict. Everything must now be done to protect the civilian population, including journalists, but also to allow journalists from foreign media access to the Gaza Strip, so that they can take over from the Palestinian journalists and inform the world about the ongoing tragedy.

We fully support the action of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) which, since the beginning of the war, has supported the Palestinian Journalists' Union (PJS), in particular through its International Safety Fund.

In all European newsrooms, the EFJ invites journalists to show their solidarity with their Palestinian colleagues. Their struggle is our struggle: freedom of information, freedom of the press, in Gaza as everywhere!

In this spirit, the Annual Meeting asks the EFJ Steering Committee to intervene with all the institutions of the European Union in order to protect Palestinian journalists, to ensure access to the Gaza strip for the journalists, and to guarantee freedom of information in the Middle East.

## **ON JOURNALISTS' WORKING CONDITIONS**

#### **5. On the renewal of LAREG+ project**

*Tabled by TGS (Turkey), SSNM (North Macedonia), TUCJ (Croatia), TUMM (Montenegro)  
(co-tabled by SINOS, Serbia, absent)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23rd-24th May 2024 in Prishtina,

Faced with the fact that Western Balkans and Turkey is a region where media freedoms are threatened to a higher degree than in Western Europe : the establishment of trade unions in private media is still prohibited; media owners refuse social dialogue about uniform working conditions; there are arrests and increased pressure on the safety of journalists, endangerment of information sources, spyware, endangering the secrecy of data;

Bearing in mind that the fight for free media and professional journalism has new, strong challenges in this region - such as impunity for attacks on journalists, the refusal of state officials to answer questions from the opposition media, the expulsion of government critics from press conferences, fake news, etc.;

Recalling that EU and UNESCO financed LAREG+ in the previous period 2017-2022, in order to strengthen media freedom and professional journalism and fight against precarious work in the Western Balkans – Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina; North Macedonia and Turkey

Pointing to the positive results of the first cycle of the LAREG+ project, in which EFJ instructors and international experts helped strengthening the journalists unions and protect against precarious work, increasing the activity and visibility of media unions;

Recalling that on November 8, 2023, the European Commission approved the new Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, which proposes a financial aid package of six billion euros for the period from 2024 to 2027.

In supporting this aims, this Annual Meeting instructs the EFJ Steering Committee:

- to submit a proposal to the European Commission and UNESCO to provide funds for renewing the LAREG+ in the period 2025-2029;
- to support regional cooperation by helping unions to establish regional labor rights network (signing MU);
- to support the network in its functioning and sustainability through projects or other means.

## **ON MEDIA PLURALISM**

### **6. On Euronews**

*Tabled by SNJ (France)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23rd-24th May 2024 in Prishtina protests against the rigged sale of Euronews media to unknown entities and Hungarian interests, despite the fact that the sale was officially made in 2022 to a Portuguese group, ALPAC, backed by European Future Media Investment (EFMI), a mysterious venture capital vehicle created specifically in Lisbon.

ALPAC's management swore to the Portuguese magazine Expresso in December 2021 that no Hungarian money was involved in the Euronews takeover. EFMI was dissolved in Lisbon in 2023, and ultimate control of Euronews was transferred via multiple shell companies to an ALPAC subsidiary registered in Dubai.

The deal is said to have been worth 170 million euros, around a third of which was provided by interests close to Hungary's political powers.

These revelations, published on 11 April 2024 by Le Monde in association with its partners, the Hungarian media outlet Direkt36 and the Portuguese magazine Expresso, cast doubt on the sale of a media company of major importance to the European news industry. Created on 1 January 1993 and based in Lyon (France), soon broadcasting in 17 languages, Euronews had established its credibility on its journalistic quality and the seriousness of its investigations carried out by an editorial team of several hundred journalists.

Journalists who have repeatedly asked their staff representatives for information on who is buying their media, to no avail. They refused to give them any serious answers. They were lied to over and

over again. 175 of the 370 employees left the company, with rage in their hearts. As a company incorporated under French law, how and why did the responsible authorities agree to the sale of Euronews? Did they do so with their eyes closed, or was business secrecy stronger than press freedom?

Euronews' head office has been transferred from Lyon to Brussels. It was welcomed on 19 March by Charles Michel, President of the European Council, and Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President of the European Commission. 'We are going to offer extensive, original and impartial coverage of the forthcoming European elections', promised Guillaume Dubois, Euronews' director general. How can we believe him when the influence of the current owners can weigh so heavily on an editorial staff that is weak, distraught and destabilised by these revelations and forcibly moved from Lyon to Brussels?

The Annual Meeting of the EFJ cannot be satisfied with the fine words of a management team that claimed not to know the buyers.

The Annual Meeting of the EFJ instructs the EFJ Steering Committee to obtain guarantees from the European Commission to the conformity of this case with the provisions of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA).

## **ON QUALITY AND ETHICAL JOURNALISM**

### **7. On promoting a favorable environment for quality journalism in the digital age**

*Tabled by FNSI (Italy)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> May 2024 in Prishtina, given that:

- information is a public good, and as public good it needs to public support;
- professional journalism and quality journalism are essential for the survival of our democracy. With the growth of disinformation, in Europe and beyond, we have witnessed a progressive erosion of the democratic basis of our societies. Disinformation, in fact, undermines citizens' ability to evaluate the facts and guide their choices with greater awareness. This is why professional journalism represents one of the pillars on which every democratic system rests, and this is why professional journalism must be defended as a public good, also through public support;

*considered that*

- only thanks to quality journalism is it possible to oppose the growing spread of fake news. We have seen the power of fake news during the pandemic, during Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine; during Brexit and in many other cases;
- defending democracy means defending quality journalism;

*instructs the EFJ Steering Committee*

- to support every initiative at European level, with the European Institutions, aimed at drawing up the "European Charter in support of quality journalism";
- to support every initiative so that the European Member States, members of the Council of Europe, fully implemented the recommendation CM/Rec(2022)4 of the Ministers of the



Council of Europe, on support for quality information, aimed at ensuring a sustainable public resources of quality media, to build trust in professional journalism and to promote media and information education, including in schools;

- to monitor and collect all the best practices and policies adopted by European member States to support professional and quality journalism, including with public aid.

## **8. On controlling and regulating the use of artificial intelligence in newsrooms**

*Tabled by CFDT (France) and DJV (Germany)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23rd-24th May 2024 in Prishtina notes that although artificial intelligence (AI) is used in its most 'basic' version in newsrooms and has been for several years (capturing sports results, elections, etc.), more and more European media are interested in 'deep learning' versions of AI, with the aim of disseminating articles and audio and video reports at lower cost.

The EFJ AM is concerned about the consequences of this announced omnipresence of AI in the media, a potential vector for job cuts, erroneous or misleading information and standardized information.

The EFJ AM demands that legislation on the use of AI is negotiated at European level in consultation with all creators: journalists, authors, musicians, photographers, video makers, etc.

The EFJ AM demands that this work is carried out on three axes (ethics; working conditions; authors' rights, right of opposition), in order to supervise and control the use of AI in European newsrooms.

### **1. Ethics**

- Do not use AI generated material that a journalist has not checked and considered, after careful examination, to be suitable for use.
- Negotiate an agreement in each media outlet that provides a framework for the use of AI and the setting up of a joint monitoring committee involving union representatives, in which quantified reports on the use of AI must be presented and reversibility decisions must be able to be taken. This agreement should be published on the website of the media outlet.
- Media outlets that use an AI system that generates or manipulates journalistic content shall disclose that the content has been artificially generated or manipulated. This does not apply to content that was produced using AI only as an assistant. In case of doubt, the transparency obligation applies.
- Demand stricter transparency rules in order to prevent public authorities/companies/parties etc. from using AI for propaganda purposes, at the risk of blurring the line between information and advertising, or even producing fake news.
- Demand stricter liability rules for platforms and clarify editorial responsibility for content generated by AI. In order to establish a level playing field this rule must not only apply for media outlets but also for social media platforms. Under press law, the offense is not the writing of the article but its publication.
- When using AI, the protection of journalistic sources should be ensured.

### **2. Working conditions**

- AI, as a tool, must not lead to job cuts in newsrooms. The working time potentially saved should be used for investigation, reporting, debate within a newsroom, and to reduce work overloads, not to limit journalistic jobs.
- Systematically enhance the value of the field: give priority to a photo, an on-the-spot report rather than a summary produced by the AI.

- The EU should observe and record how the number of journalists within the EU is developing under the influence of AI.
- Journalists must be trained in the use of AI and to gain a deeper understanding of AI and to prevent abuse.
- The EFJ AM demands that all AI-generated content, whether text, audio or images, be edited by human professionals before publication: proofreading and correction by a journalist, a professional translator, a sound engineer or a graphic designer, etc.

### 3. Authors rights, opposition rights

- Journalists and other authors must be remunerated proportionately when their content has been used for AI training. The right to be remunerated should be realised by a collective management organisation.
- Replace the text and data mining (TDM) exception with a licensing model.
- Establish an Opt-Out mechanism, that is practicable, simple and effective (if the TDM-exception is not removed)
- AI system owners must be obliged to publish a transparent and detailed record of the content that has been used to train their systems.

## ON AUTHORS' RIGHTS

### 9. On strengthening the EFJ-capacity on authors' rights

*Tabled by the Danish Union of Journalists (supported by the Authors' Rights Expert Group)*

The Annual Meeting of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> May 2024 in Prishtina, Kosovo, urges the EFJ Steering Committee to strengthen its capacity in order to enable more impactful lobby work on the EU-legislation on authors' rights.

Noting that the EFJ, in cooperation with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) from 2003 until 2020 used to work for authors' rights by having an authors' rights officer employed through an agreement between the two organisations.

Noting that since this arrangement proved no longer possible, the IFJ has continued to provide AREG with administrative support.

Believing that the absence of an authors' rights officer does not allow us to work as effectively on behalf of members as the situation requires. In particular believing that this requires a dedicated officer (or officers, or part of an officer) who is able to interact with other groups who share our objectives.

Considering that the EFJ now needs to be much more visible at the EU level, since we can foresee a new round of EU legislation on authors' rights: at the copyright conference in Namur 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> April, hosted by the Belgian Presidency, a series of possible revisions were outlined:

- The combination of the AI-Act and the copyright directive on Text & Data Mining (TDM) in particular regarding Article 4 on commercial use of TDM calls for a new regulation.
- Regarding streaming of TV there is so much uncertainty about remuneration of authors and performers that we can expect this to be discussed and hopefully solved.

- Remuneration of authors under the Newspaper Publishers' Neighboring Rights established by the Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market: Article 15.5 can be seen not to be properly transposed in several countries; together with other uncertainties within the Article this could be grounds for a revision.
- Other changes might come up.

Urging that the voice of European journalists must be strengthened in authors' rights and copyright matters.

The Annual Meeting urges the EFJ Steering Committee to find ways to increase the capacity and knowledge increase its competences when it comes to authors' rights by ensuring that the capacity and knowledge on authors' rights and to ensure that and copyright is embedded within the Federation's daily work, so that the EFJ can be both visible, cooperative and a reliable and important player in the field of authors' rights.

Considering that authors' rights is a global issue, and that EU-initiatives and legislations also have an international impact, it is important that EFJ and AREG are in dialogue with our partner, IFJ on this.

## **ON EFJ-IFJ COOPERATION**

### **10. On a united, strong and cooperative journalists' trade union movement at European and international level**

*Tabled by the EFJ Steering Committee*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23rd-24th May 2024 in Prishtina, believes that the solidarity and organisation of the journalists' trade union movement must be coordinated at European and International level.

Having autonomous organisations that are not dependent on or subservient to each other requires a very high level of dialogue, cooperation and trust. These organisations are not in competition with each other, but must work together to improve the working conditions of journalists in Europe and around the world.

Since the end of 2022, the Steering Committee of the European Federation of Journalists has mandated a "consultation group" to discuss with the IFJ's representatives on transparency and a constructive dialogue, also involving the dialogue with unions who left the International Federation of Journalists in 2023.

These decisions are the result of a number of problems that now need to be resolved.

The proactive approach of the EFJ 'consultation group' has been to work hand in hand with an IFJ delegation, the IFJ 'dialogue group', mandated to propose measures in order to solve issues raised by several unions in Europe (see motion at the IFJ Annual Meeting in Athens), asking for more transparency in the IFJs work.

We must continue to work to find solutions to strengthen the unity of the journalists' trade union movement, both at European and global level.

Finding solutions means recognizing the problems, making the right diagnosis and taking the necessary decisions to ensure that solutions are put in place.

Finding solutions means not creating new obstacles.

European members are solidaric with European and International work.

Constructive dialogue implies listening to each other, trust, sincerity and courage to implement the necessary solutions.

#### The EFJ Annual Meeting

- mandates the Steering Committee to continue this work of dialogue and to ensure that the voice of trade unions and associations is heard when they call for improvements in order to work better together;
- encourages the Steering Committee to participate in the necessary meetings in order to contribute to the work of the IFJ dialogue group responsible for making proposals before the next Congress in Paris in 2026;
- supports this work, which is being carried out with mutual respect, dialogue and the autonomy of each organisation.
- informs and consults the EFJ-affiliates transparently and proactively about important steps and all solutions discussed at the Steering Committee and the dialogue group

## ON NATIONAL ISSUES

### 11. On Italian Public Service Media RAI

*Tabled by FNSI (Italy)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23rd-24th May 2024 in Prishtina,

*given that:*

a Public service media has a fundamental role in the protection of media freedom and pluralism of information, and represents, at the same time, one of the main pillars of democracy and rule of law;

*whereas:*

to be real and effective, a public service media has to be characterized by some essential elements:

- editorial independence;
- independent governance;
- adequate and stable financial resources;

*considered that:*

- in Italy, with the reform of the government in 2015 the influence of political parties and control of governments has grown, more and more over time;
- with regard to sustainable and predictable financial resources, with the latest budget law the government reduced the license fee from 90 euros to 70 euros per year. This approach is in

line with that to continue to reduce the budget of the RAI and consequently to increase the political control and influence on public service media;

- the EBU General Director, Noel Curran, made it clear last February at the hearing of the Parliament's RAI Supervisory Commission, where he said that the Italian license fee is lower than the European average;
- recently, the Government has adopted at the Parliament's RAI Supervisory Commission a new document regarding the Next European elections. The new disposals do not respect the rules of "par condicio", allowing the government and majority forces wider presence in public service broadcasts, compared to the opposition political forces, in contrast to the fundamental principle of equal treatment, necessary to guarantee an effective democratic participation. In this way the RAI becomes an instrument of propaganda;
- the Italian legislation, with regard to public service, is not in line with the key principles of the EMFA:

a) regarding the independence of the public service from political power, and editorial independence, it is urgent to assure, as says the article 5 of the EMFA, that "Member States shall ensure that the procedures for the appointment and the dismissal of the head of management or the members of the management board of public service media providers aim to guarantee the independence of the public service media providers. The appointment of the head of management or the members of the management board of public service media providers shall be based on transparent, open, effective and non-discriminatory procedures and transparent, objective, non-discriminatory and proportionate criteria laid down in advance at national level. The duration of their term of office shall be sufficient for the effective independence of public service media providers.";

b) regarding the aspects of ensuring adequate and stable financial resources, Italy has to respect the principle of EMFA, specifically, "Member States shall ensure that funding procedures for public service media providers are based on transparent and objective criteria laid down in advance. Those procedures shall guarantee that public service media providers have adequate, sustainable and predictable financial resources corresponding to the fulfillment of and capacity to develop within their public service remit. Those resources shall be such that editorial independence of public service media providers is safeguarded.";

*instructs the EFJ Steering Committee:*

to intervene with the European Commission in order to promote any initiative aimed to monitor and

to supervise the correct application in the Italian legislation of the European media Freedom Act, especially with regard to:

- a) transparent and public procedures to select the governance;
- b) safeguarding adequate and stable financial resources which shall be sufficient for the effective independence of public service media;
- c) independent editorial policy aimed to guarantee pluralism of information and to promote democratic participation of all citizens to the public debate.

## 12. On presumption of innocence in Italy

*Tabled by FNSI (Italy)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23rd-24th May 2024 in Prishtina

*given that*

with the entry into force of the law n. 15 of 2024 (European Delegation Law), the Italian legislator transposed the European directive, already transposed with the legislative decree n. 188 of 2021, with the aim to give a more adequate transposition of the EU Directive 2016/343 on the presumption of innocence;

*whereas*

- initially, in Italy this European directive, dated 2016, had not been transposed because the Government in office at that time had considered national law to be comply with the European legislation;
- in the Italian legal system, indeed, the article 27 of the Constitution protects the principle of presumption of innocence of the defendant. Not only the Italian Constitution protects the mentioned principle, but also it is protected by the article 48 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, by the judgments of the ECHR and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- compliance with the principle of the presumption of innocence is included by the Charter of Duties of Italian journalists and it constitutes an obligation for all those who provide information;

*considered that*

- the Italian government has further implemented the Directive 2016/343/EU and it has reformed it, *in pejus*, – the relationship between the media and the justice bodies. The mentioned European delegation law engages the Government to adopt a legislative decree, aimed to amend the article 114 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, with the purpose of prohibiting the publication of the decisions (in full or in summary) on pre-trial detention. The Italian legislator, therefore, under the pretext of strengthening the presumption of innocence, weakens even more the right of journalists to inform and to citizens to be informed, guaranteed by the article 21 of the Italian Constitution, and by the European Convention on Human Rights. By the way, within the Italian legal system, the decisions on pre-trial detention do not present the suspected or accused persons as guilty;
- the Directive 2016/343/EU at number 16 of its considerations says that *“the presumption of innocence would be violated if public statements made by public authorities, or judicial decisions other than those on guilt, referred to a suspect or an accused person as being guilty, for as long as that person has not been proved guilty according to law. Such statements and judicial decisions should not reflect an opinion that the person is guilty. This should be without prejudice to acts of the prosecution which aim to prove the guilt of the suspect or accused person, such as the indictment, and without prejudice to judicial decisions as a result of which a suspended sentence takes effect, provided that the rights of the defense are respected. This should also be without prejudice to preliminary decisions of a procedural nature, which are taken by judicial or other competent authorities and are based on suspicion or on elements of incriminating evidence, such as decisions on pre-trial detention, provided that such decisions do not refer to the suspect or accused person as being guilty. Before taking a preliminary decision of a procedural nature the competent authority might first have to verify that there are sufficient elements of incriminating evidence against the suspect or accused person to justify the decision concerned, and the decision could contain reference to those elements.”*;
- following the entry into force of the legislative decree n. 188 of 2021, the justice bodies and

the police forces no longer provide press with information and news, even when these do not concern criminal investigations; this situation causes a serious and unacceptable harm to the right to inform public opinion;

- when the European Delegation Law is definitively applied, the situation of press freedom in Italy will have seriously worsened. With negative and worrying consequences on the fundamental principles and values that inform our democracies;

*instructs the EFJ Steering Committee*

- to support Fnsi with actions to oppose to any attempt to limit the right of information; to protect freedom of expression and press freedom;
- to intervene with the European Commission in order to promote any initiative, not excluding the request for activation of the infringement procedure against the Italian Government, already made by the Fnsi, in order to sanction excessive delegation and to remove, from the legislative provision on the presumption of innocence, as it is formulated, any obstacle that prevents journalists from doing their job and citizens from knowing facts of public interest.

### **13. On defamation in Italy**

*Tabled by FNSI (Italy)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23rd-24th May 2024 in Prishtina,

*given that*

- the Italian Constitutional Court in 2021 declared detention for journalist does not comply with article 21 of the Italian Constitution;
- before the decision of the Italian Constitutional Court, the European Court of Human Rights condemned Italy for violation of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights;

*considered that*

- the Italian Parliament is examining a bill aimed at reforming, in pejus, the crime of defamation through the press. On one hand the bill eliminates the detention for journalists, on the other hand disproportionately increases financial penalties. Indeed, the elimination of detention does not guarantee the full and effective freedom of information and the right to be informed, and is therefore not sufficient to align the internal regulatory framework with the international one;
- according to the National Federation of the Italian Press (FNSI), the sanctioning system does not comply with the Italian Constitution and the EHR Convention, as it maintains that dissuasive force contrary to the exercise of freedom of expression, and that chilling effect to which numerous decisions of the Strasbourg Court have referred. Given the situation of many journalists, freelance or self-employed, with very low salaries, and without specific guarantees from their editors, this sanctioning framework, if confirmed, would represent an aggravating element;
- last April, the Italian legislator during the examination at the Parliamentary Commission, presented some amendments aimed to reintroduce: a) prison sentences; b) very high financial penalties; and c) disqualification from the profession. Only thanks to the numerous interventions and protest, including that of the National Federation of the Italian Press, the government majority withdrew all amendments to the bill;

- despite that, the bill of defamation through the press is excessively disproportionate and it puts in serious danger freedom of press and democracy in Italy. In the bill remain high financial penalties, and, as said EHR Court in the case Riolo vs Italy (2008) “the sentence (Italian sentence) to pay these sums (over 40,000 euros) was likely to dissuade him (the journalist) from continuing to inform the public on topics of general interest”,

*instructs the EFJ Steering Committee*

- to support FNSI with actions to oppose to any attempt to limit the right of information; to protect freedom of expression, press freedom and the work of journalists;
- to intervene with the European Institutions, and with the bodies of Council of Europe in order to promote any initiative, aimed at:
  - a) monitor the quality of information and democracy in Italy, and avoid retreats in terms of the rule of law;
  - b) guarantee the right to inform and the right to be informed;
  - c) monitor the Italian legislation and its coherence with the fundamental principles of the Italian Constitution, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights in which freedom of expression and freedom of the press have a primary importance.

**14. On the Italian Press Agency AGI and its potential conflict of interest**

*Tabled by FNSI (Italy)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23rd-24th May 2024 in Prishtina,

*given that*

AGI (Agenzia Giornalistica Italia) has been an important source of primary information since 1965. It is controlled by Eni which is controlled by the Italian Minister of Finance;

*considered that*

- there are commercial negotiations to sell the press agency (AGI) to one of the major publishers at national level. This editor publishes three newspapers of right-wing (Il Tempo, Libero and Il Giornale);
- the publisher, Antonio Angelucci, is a member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies and he is a member of the same party as the Minister of Finance, Giancarlo Giorgetti, who, as mentioned, controls Eni and therefore AGI;
- if the purchase transaction takes place there would be a serious editorial concentration, incoherent with the new European legislation – European Media Freedom Act - with negative effects on pluralism of information;
- regarding the matter mentioned, many questions were presented in both the Chamber of Deputies and Senate and also to the European Commission. In each document presented were underlined the risks of a such operation, regarding: a) dangerous relationship between politics and information in Italy; b) the presence of an evident conflict of interests; c) high risks to keep employment levels, their autonomy and independence; d) the negative impact of the media market concentration on media pluralism;



- an important decision of the Italian Constitutional Court (sentence no. 112 of 1993) underlined that the right of information, guaranteed by the article 21 of the Italian Constitution, has to be qualified and characterized by the pluralism of source, from which to draw knowledge and news, which entails, among other things, the constraint on the legislator to prevent the formation of dominant market positions;
- even the National Federation of the Italian Press (FNSI) has denounced, many times, the risks to democracy and information of this purchase transaction, demonstrating solidarity and closeness to journalists of the Press Agency, and it has presented documents both to the National Authorities and to the European Institutions;

*instructs the EFJ Steering Committee*

- to support Fnsi with actions to oppose to any attempt to realize a worrying restriction of right of information and right to be informed;
- to protect freedom of expression, press freedom and the work of journalists;
- to intervene with the European Institutions in order to promote any initiative aimed at recalling the Italian Government to respect:
  - a) the principles of internal market;
  - b) the legislative disposal of the European Media Freedom Act, regarding the editorial concentrations and their risks for democracy and pluralism of information.

## **15. On the importance of recovering the media as an integral part of Ukraine's recovery**

*Tabled by NUJU (Ukraine)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23rd-24th May 2024 in Prishtina notes that Ukrainian independent media play a critical role as reliable sources of information in conditions of full-scale war. For more than 2 years, Ukrainian journalists have been performing their work in extreme conditions of physical danger and economic crisis.

The Ukrainian media industry lacks a financial basis for recovery due to several factors:

- 1) lack of traditional sources of income: destruction of advertising markets in the regions; significant reduction of the advertising market in the capital
- 2) migration of the population and a decrease in income from subscriptions;
- 3) loss of interest of big business in media preservation;
- 4) lack of institutional media support programs.

Because of this, most Ukrainian media suffer from the uncertainty of the future, financial problems, and lack of personnel.

Aid from international organizations, including the Emergency Fund, created by the European and International Federations of Journalists, and contributions from unions and associations of journalists in European countries supported Ukrainian journalists in the most critical period. With the support of international partners, the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU) helped more than 4,500 journalists and more than 200 newsrooms; in particular, it restored the publication of 30 newspapers in the front-line territories.

However, a short planning horizon leads to a reduction in the number of jobs for journalists and the formation of "news deserts." These gaps are filled by destructive Russian propaganda and unverified and anonymous sources of information, which increases the audience's sensitivity to misinformation.

These problems are raised in the White Paper developed by the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) in 2023 and which took into account a significant part of the proposals of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine.

Professional journalism has a great influence on increasing the transparency and accountability of the authorities, which is especially important in the conditions when international donors send significant funds to Ukraine for reconstruction.

However, the recovery programs presented by the Ukrainian government and the governments of European countries do not provide for the recovery of the media. This creates a situation where the public in the affected regions does not have the opportunity to control the spending of funds on infrastructure renewal - due to the closure of the media in these regions.

The Annual Meeting of the European Federation of Journalists calls on donors to develop long-term support programs for Ukrainian media and to make such programs part of Ukraine's recovery plans.

The Annual Meeting instructs the EFJ Steering Committee:

- to apply to the European Commission with a proposal to consider the issue of long-term support for Ukrainian media as part of the recovery plan for Ukraine;
- to appeal to the governments of the countries of the European Union with a call to include media recovery as a separate direction in the assistance programs for the restoration of Ukraine;
- to consider the possibility of transferring part of the confiscated assets of the Russian Federation for long-term support of Ukrainian media and journalists who suffered as a result of the armed aggression;
- to sign on behalf of the European Federation of Journalists the White Paper on Long-term financial support for Ukrainian media and journalists, which was developed by the Global Forum for Media Development with the participation of the NUJU.

The EFJ Annual Meeting appeal to the Government and Parliament of Ukraine:

- to create a Ukrainian media support independent fund as a transparent and fair mechanism for distributing financial support to newsrooms; involve Ukrainian media organizations in the management of the Fund;
- to provide tax benefits and other forms of assistance to Ukrainian media to reduce the financial pressure in the conditions of war and the lack of traditional sources of funding.

## **16. On Independent Public Service in Serbian Language in Kosovo**

*Tabled by UNS (Serbia) - **NOT PRESENT** (not valid: not co-signed by a present affiliate)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> May 2024 in Prishtina,

Noting that, at the initiative of the Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS), in the negotiations between Belgrade and Prishtina (Vienna, 2006-2007) led by UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, his Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement (the so-called Ahtisaari Plan) included the

Serb community's right to a guaranteed public service in its native language, which would have its own broadcasting frequency;

Recalling that the Constitution of Kosovo (June 2008) guarantees the Serb community the right to an independent television channel in its native language, which will cover the entire territory of Kosovo;

Stressing that the Law on Radio Television of Kosovo (enacted in 2012) did not implement the constitutional provision stating that this channel shall have an independent founding, managing and editorial structure, or that it shall cover the entire territory of Kosovo and have a special broadcasting frequency;

Pointing out that the March Pogrom against the Serb community (March 17 -21, 2004) began after Kosovo public service RTK released fake news that three Albanian boys had drowned in the Ibar River "while running from a group of Serb youths," in which 19 people were killed, 39 churches and monasteries were damaged or destroyed, rural and urban settlements were burned down, more than 900 Serbs were beaten up or harassed, and around 4,000 were expelled;

Faced with the fact that 20 years later (March 17, 2024), the Kosovo public service repeated the fake news of March 16, 2004 on the website of the television channel in the Serbian language – RTK2, as well as on the website in Albanian, and that since the founding of the website in the Serbian language the RTK2 staff has not had editorial authority over it,

The EFJ Annual Meeting instructs the Steering Committee:

1. To ask the Kosovo Assembly to pass a law that will, in line with the Ahtisaari Plan and the Constitution of Kosovo, give the Serb community a channel in its native language, with founding, managing and editorial independence and a separate broadcasting frequency that will cover the entire territory of Kosovo.
2. To request that this law envisage financing of this independent channel from the subscription to public services.
3. To monitor the implementation of this resolution in collaboration with international bodies and organizations and journalists' associations operating in Kosovo.

*Context: this proposal of UNS is based on the sixty-year practice of the media public broadcasters in Belgium, with completely separate public broadcasters.*

*In Belgium, since 1960, there have been three separate public broadcasters:*

1. *VRT (Flemish Radio and Television Broadcasting Organisation): This is a public broadcaster for the Dutch-speaking community, based in Flanders.*
2. *RTBF - (Radio-télévision belge de la communauté française): Public broadcaster for the French-speaking community, serving Wallonia and a large part of Brussels.*
3. *BRF (Belgischer Rundfunk): broadcaster for the German-speaking community of Belgium.*

*Their model and good experience are an unequivocal recommendation that such a concept should be implemented in Kosovo.*

## **17. On foreign correspondents paid on a freelance basis by the French media**

*Tabled by SNJ, SNJ-CGT, CFDT-Journalistes (France)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> May 2024 in Prishtina would like to draw attention to the situation of French journalists who work as freelance 'correspondents' for French and French-speaking media in foreign countries.

As essential links in the international news chain, many of these journalists encounter the greatest difficulties in ensuring that their rights are respected, whether in terms of salaries, social security contributions, insurance or health cover.

To avoid the disappearance of this network of correspondents, and thus ultimately a journalistic desert for the French-language media in France, Belgium, Switzerland and Canada, but also in French-speaking Africa and elsewhere in the world, the French unions have for several years been constantly urging the government, elected representatives and public bodies to look into the treatment suffered by these journalists.

The majority of foreign correspondents working for the French-language media are insecure freelancers who are mistreated by their employers. The employers in question are often large media companies, whether broadcast or print, public or private.

Too many of the companies that employ them in France do not respect the law, in particular the presumption of salaried status that exists in France for journalists paid on a freelance basis. All too often these correspondents are forced to produce invoices, author's notes or to set up their own production company.

This can lead to bizarre and dramatic situations. There's the correspondent in Ukraine, a victim of post-traumatic stress disorder, who has to give up applying for sick leave for fear of being struck off by the social security system. Or the journalist who works for a public media outlet, but is attached to a production company based in Côte d'Ivoire with a contract governed by Mauritian law.

The Annual Meeting instructs the EFJ Steering Committee to call on the French authorities, the legislator and the media that employ these journalists to give them access, like their fellow journalists in France, to health cover, a pension and unemployment benefits. These journalists abroad must be able to carry out their news work in complete safety. Their role is fundamental to press freedom and the right to independent, high-quality information in France, Europe and the rest of the world.

## **18. On the respect for the presumption that journalists working for several employers in France are salaried employees**

*Tabled by SNJ, SNJ-CGT, CFDT (France)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> May 2024 in Prishtina notes that journalists in France have enjoyed a presumption of an employment contract for 50 years.

Passed unanimously, the Cressard law was promulgated on 4 July 1974 and provides important protection for journalists, particularly those working for several employers.

The law was passed in the name of the need to provide social protection for journalists. To enable everyone to have social security, retirement pensions, unemployment insurance, sick leave and also the right to negotiate collectively or to take part in professional elections and to be represented in companies.

Journalism is a public good, it is essential to the proper functioning of a healthy democracy, and there can be no quality journalism with insecure, socially unprotected journalists. This was obvious fifty years ago.

Yet today, hundreds of French employers violate this law all the time.

When freelance journalists are dismissed without a breach of employment contract, preventing them from accessing their rights to unemployment benefit, as recently happened at Radio Nova, owned by businessman Mathieu Pigasse.

When freelance journalists are not taken into account in compulsory annual negotiations, as is the case at Infopro Digital, France's leading trade press group, for example.

When the public service media multiply the number of fixed-term contracts, even though these are prohibited for professional journalists.

When publishers' and employers' unions refuse to open annual negotiations for each type of press, or when they fail to set minimum rates for piecework remuneration.

The European Federation of Journalists Annual Meeting in Prishtina gives its full support to the French trade unions in their actions to ensure that the Cressard Law is respected and instructs the EFJ Steering Committee:

- to write a letter to the European publishers' organisations, to which the French publishers' organisations belong, to remind them of their obligations;
- to take part in activities to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Cressard Law;
- to promote European exchanges, particularly in the area of collective bargaining for freelance journalists.

#### **19. On Public Service Media in Poland**

*Amended motion tabled by the EFJ Steering Committee (the initial version, which has been modified, was tabled by SDP, Poland)*

The Annual Meeting of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), meeting on 23rd-24th May 2024 in Prishtina, notes that public service media (PSM) in independent Poland have existed for 31 years. Changes in them have always taken place by way of laws adopted by the Parliament and signed by the President. For these 31 years, the basis for changes in the public media has always been the law in force in Poland: the Constitution, the Broadcasting Act and the Act on the National Media Council.

The AM notes that public television has become an issue of political control in Poland. The AM considers that public media must never be put at the service of politicians in power, whatever their political leanings.

The AM asks the Steering Committee to continue to denounce any attempt at political interference and to do its utmost to ensure that TVP becomes a truly independent public broadcaster. To that end, the AM asks the Steering Committee to mobilise the forces of the three Polish affiliates of the EFJ (SDP, SJ, SDRP) to monitor any undue political interference and to ensure the effective implementation in Poland of the new provisions of the European Media Freedom Act.

The AM also urges the Polish authorities to work closely with representatives of journalists' organisations in Poland on a proposed new public service media act which will bolster the independence of public service media leaving it entirely free of political control and able to fulfill the principles enshrined in the current Broadcasting Act of "pluralism, impartiality and balance". The assembly calls the EFJ SC to continue to encourage and promote these principles, if necessary, through contacts with the new government, in the coming months as work on the new law proceeds in Poland.

## **20. On French media outlet "Le Média"**

*Tabled by SNJ, SNJ-CGT, CFDT-Journalistes (France)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23rd-24th May 2024 in Prishtina, deplores and condemns the difficulties encountered by the French online television channel "Le Média" in obtaining a broadcast channel on TV decoders subscription offers.

In the summer of 2023, Le Média obtained approval from the French media regulator Arcom (Autorité de régulation de la communication audiovisuelle et numérique) to be broadcast on internet boxes and connected TV sets as a general news channel. But since then, with the exception of one subscription offer (Free), private TV decoder operators have been slow to respond or have ignored Le Média's request.

It is therefore clear that these private operators can prevent a channel from broadcasting, despite the approval of the French regulatory authority. The EFJ Annual Meeting supports Le Média's legitimate request and calls for this abnormal situation to be remedied. Such approval from Arcom should be accompanied by a guarantee of broadcasting by telecommunications operators.

Beyond this, it is the ownership of news channels by these same telecom operators that raises questions. This dual role places them in the unacceptable position of judge and jury, allowing them to favor their own channels to the detriment of their competitors. This is an attack on media pluralism and the freedom to inform and be informed.

The EFJ Annual Meeting instructs the EFJ Steering Committee to denounce to the French authorities the legal possibility, in France, of being both a telecommunication operator and the publisher of a news channel broadcast on these online channels.

## URGENT RESOLUTIONS

### **21. On the situation of public service media in numerous countries and request for a BREG campaign against untenable conditions**

*Tabled by the EFJ Steering Committee (in coordination with BREG)*

The Annual Meeting of the European Federation of Journalists, meeting in Prishtina, Kosovo, on 23-24<sup>th</sup> May,

noting, that the state of journalism is worsening in several EU countries and accession candidates, where public service media are being used politically and weakened financially, instead of guaranteeing citizens' independent, plural and quality information as their remit requires.

Being most alarmed of the most recent examples, to name only a few:

- In Italy, recent major politically-influenced internal management changes at Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI), direct control of editorial policy and attacks against well-known RAI journalists, and attempts to shrink even further the financial autonomy of the Italian broadcasting service are another worrying development that the recently adopted European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) should prevent. The EMFA will take into effect at national level in August 2025.
- In Slovakia, where a draft law in discussion foresees the dissolution of Radio and Television of Slovakia (RTVS) to replace it with the new Slovak Television and Radio (STaR). Drastic changes to the appointment and competence of oversight bodies would set up government control and effectively end the public broadcaster's independence, contradicting Article 5 of the EU's Media Freedom Act.
- In Bosnia Herzegovina where one public broadcaster denied services to another resulting in a shutdown of most programs because of unpaid debts for properly provided but never paid services. This is happening in a context of irresponsible political interference contrary to the public interest and without any political will to solve the problem that has been ongoing for years.
- In Spain, criticism of the lack of independence of the public media is a constant, calling them into question. The public service media of Galicia region, CRTVG, faces the most serious situation: employees have been denouncing the situation for more than five years, demanding compliance with the law that requires, since 2011, the election of the general director of the corporation by a significant majority of parliament, and to have a news council and a editorial statute.
- In France, a massive strike is underway on May 23 and 24 in defense of the public broadcasting sector threatened by a government bill to merge companies and by uncertain financing.
- In Poland, many journalists were fired in TVP and Polish public radio.
- In Switzerland, federal government plans to cut drastically financial resources of the national public service media, and strong political forces will bring to popular vote a cut of the budget by 50.,

- And in a number of other countries, including The Netherlands, Sweden, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo, Hungary, etc.

Considering with great concern the impact of these developments that violate the principles of EMFA, which says in Article 5:

Article 5(2): “Member States shall ensure that the procedures for the appointment and the dismissal of the head of management or the members of the management board of public service media providers aim to guarantee the independence of the public service media providers (...) They may be dismissed before the end of their term of office only exceptionally where they no longer fulfill the legally predefined conditions required for the performance of their duties laid down in advance by national law or for specific reasons of illegal conduct or serious misconduct as defined in advance by national law.”

Therefore the EFJ AM call on the EFJ Steering Committee:

- to create a Europe-wide campaign led by BREG to ask governments to guarantee freedom and protection of public service media and to emphasize the value of public media for society and its indispensable contribution to democracy;
- to assist stakeholders and our affiliates, in cooperation with the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) to assist in the correct application of Article 5 of the EMFA;
- to seek and strengthen cooperation with like-minded bodies and promote advocacy visits to focal points where the situation is endangered or shows threatening signs.

## **22. On Julian Assange and his right to appeal against extradition to US**

*Tabled by SNJ (France)*

The Annual Meeting of the EFJ, meeting in Prishtina (Kosovo), on 23 and 24 May 2024,

- Considering that the journalist Julian Assange has been the subject of prosecution and incrimination by the American justice system for more than 14 years because he has revealed, in particular, war crimes committed by the US army in Iraq and Afghanistan;

- Considering that this information has been published by the world's media and that he is the only person to be the subject of a veritable manhunt;

- Considering that his only "crime" is to have exercised his mission as a journalist in the public interest;

- Considering that the Royal Court of the United Kingdom, in its decision handed down on 20 May, has for the first time allowed Julian Assange to plead his case on the merits, without giving a ruling on the extradition request made by the United States, where, if forced to do so, Assange could face 175 years in prison for alleged espionage;

- Considering that this whole procedure is designed to intimidate journalists all over the world: if an Australian journalist who has published in Europe found himself on trial before an American



domestic court under a domestic law, who in the world would dare to report on potential abuses by the United States of America and other countries?

- Considering that this journalist has been held, in particularly indignified and inhuman conditions, in Belmarsh high security prison for 5 years, without any judicial reason;

- Considering that the decision of 20 May does not restore his freedom;

The EFJ AM instructs the EFJ Steering Committee:

- to do everything possible to ensure that he is released and returned to his family;
- to formally call on European leaders (Council, Commission, Parliament) to demand that the US authorities immediately drop the charges against Julian Assange.

## Statements submitted to the AM 2024

### 1. On media freedom situation in Hungary

*Tabled by MUOSZ (Hungary)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23rd-24th May 2024 in Prishtina, notes that the situation of Hungarian journalism is currently worryingly bad.

There are increasing restrictions on press freedom in the country and government influence over the media is growing. Many media companies are owned by oligarchs close to the government, which seriously threatens objective and balanced information. In addition, more and more journalists are being threatened, harassed and censored in the course of their work.

Therefore, Hungarian journalism is currently facing serious challenges and preserving the independence and integrity of the profession is crucial for a democratic society.

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has been governing by decree for years. The Parliament is just a decoration. Russian influence is felt daily in propaganda, so as is Chinese influence in the economy.

Hard times are coming, but the EFJ AM believes that the journalistic community in Europe can cooperate to save the freedom of the press and information.

### 2. On a strong, independent and diverse public broadcasting in France

*Tabled by SNJ, SNJ-CGT, CFDT-Journalistes (France)*

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) Annual Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> May 2024 in Prishtina denounces the French government's dogmatic desire to restructure the country's public broadcasting system and warns of the editorial and social dangers of such a 'merger'.

In France, a massive strike is underway on May 23 and 24 in defense of the public broadcasting sector threatened by a government bill to merge companies and by uncertain financing.

Since the beginning of 2024, and the appointment of the new Minister of Culture, Rachida Dati, the French government has been saying that it wants to 'move quickly' to 'bring together', in the space of a few months, several entities in its public broadcasting system: France Télévisions, Radio France, but also France Médias Monde (RFI, France 24, etc.) and the INA.

These companies now produce and broadcast a large proportion of France's news. Their newsrooms employ nearly 20% of the country's journalists. The diversity and quality of the information produced by these various bodies are undeniable, and they are regularly cited as bulwarks against 'fake news'.

These entities, which have already been affected by vast cost-cutting plans over the past 15 years, have been weakened by the government's decision two years ago to overhaul their funding system. The abolition of an earmarked tax ('the audiovisual license fee'), and its replacement by a system that is easier to control by the political authorities, has destabilised the public broadcasting companies and threatened their independence.

Under the guise of creating 'a powerful public broadcaster', we fear that this roadmap will quickly lead to budget cuts, staff cuts and the termination of company agreements...

This restructuring could lead to the introduction of a social model based on the excessive multi-skilling of journalists. Too many broadcasting companies in Europe and elsewhere have already experienced this scenario.

It is out of the question to accept the merger of newsrooms, the disappearance of collectives and their work cultures, and the end of media specificities.

The tireless, multi-tasking journalist, capable of doing everything at once, TV, radio, web and social networks? A technocratic dream but a nightmare for journalists' working conditions!

We are aware of the additional danger posed by a reform that could, if the far right unfortunately came to power in France, leave a concentrated public broadcasting system even more vulnerable to the pressures of political power. In Hungary, Poland and Italy, wherever it is in power, the far right is trying to use public broadcasting to its own ends.

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), meeting at its Annual Meeting in Prishtina (Kosovo), wishes to express its support for public service broadcasting employees and their representatives, who are once again being subjected to opportunistic political plans that threaten their companies, their communities and their working conditions.

The Annual Meeting of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) calls on the Steering Committee to make strong representations to the French and European parliamentary groups. They must be urged not to give in to these technocratic and dogmatic plans, to reject the 'mergers - cuts', and to defend the diversity of public service broadcasting!

These channels, newsrooms and journalists need the political support they need to obtain a budget commensurate with their remit. They must be protected by multiannual funding based on an earmarked tax, independent of the State's cyclical arbitrations.

The Annual Meeting of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) calls for the defence of the diversity of public service broadcasting, and reaffirms its opposition to forced restructuring in this sector, in France as elsewhere!

### **3. On Belgian police raids against two Kurdish television channels**

*Tabled by DISK Basin-Is (Turkey)*

The European Federation of Journalists meeting in Prishtina, Kosovo, on 23-24 May 2024 notes that on 26th April, Belgian federal police searched the premises of two centers of media in exile – the Kurdish television channels Stêrk TV and Medya Haber (Medya News) in Denderleeuw, Flanders.

The EFJ General Meeting further notes that in these raids, equipment was destroyed and doors were broken down. These news platforms have been in Belgium for twenty years.

The EFJ General Meeting notes its concern that these raids appear to be related to issues between states and not local laws.

This EFJ General Meeting notes that exiled and diaspora media appear to be suffering increasing levels of attack and harassment. We note in particular the targeting of Iranian journalists in the UK, the despicable murder of Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey, and attacks on Sikh journalists in the USA.

The meeting further notes that a report by Freedom House recorded acts of 'transnational repression' between 2014 to 2023, recorded 112 incidents of "physical repression" against journalists by 26 governments – including China, Russia, Belarus, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Cambodia.

This meeting notes that the EFJ swiftly condemned the raid in Denderleeuw ([EFJ statement](#) issued on 26 April).

This meeting calls on the EFJ Steering Committee to build links with diaspora media representatives in Europe to better monitor the issues they experience, and to reassure them that we stand with exile media in addressing their issues.

This meeting further calls on the EFJ Steering Committee to communicate this concern to affiliates and to work with affiliates to build their own links with diaspora journalists communities with a view to improving their defense.

### **4. On the upcoming "foreign influence agent" draft law in Turkey**

*Tabled by TGS (Turkey), GCD (Turkey) and Basin-Sen (Cyprus)*

The Annual Meeting of the European Federation of Journalists, meeting in Prishtina, Kosovo, on 23-24 May 2024, drew attention to the concerning news about the draft amendment to the Turkish Penal Code by creating a new crime of "foreign influence agent".

This draft amendment puts under danger any journalist, researcher or writer reporting, doing research or comment in/or about Turkey whether they are paid locally or by foreign funds.

The EFJ Annual Meeting also notes that this new initiative, which provides for prison sentences, may create the danger of criminalization of all non-governmental organizations, including journalists' organisations, media outlets and journalists' unions, which benefit from all kinds of foreign funds to carry out different projects aimed at enriching Turkish civil society and democratic rights.

This EFJ General Meeting notes that Turkish NGOs and media organizations not affiliated with the Turkish government or pro-government business people/organisations are already experiencing

financial difficulties in carrying out such projects for the benefit of strengthening freedom of expression and democracy in Turkey.

The EFJ AM instructs the EFJ Steering Committee to demand the Turkish government to refrain from such legal steps that could further narrow the shrinking public and democratic space in Turkey.