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In defence of French public service media against a dangerous reform

UNI Media, Entertainment and Arts, representing more than 130 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 CFDT unions who oppose this reform of the Institut national de l'audiovisuel, France Médias Monde, France Télévisions and Radio France.

Our democratic European societies need a strong public audiovisual service to preserve pluralism, support cultural diversity, ensure universal service and participation by all citizens. French public broadcasting plays an important role worldwide. Its quality is recognized and is a point of reference beyond the French-speaking world. Its commitment to cooperation and production across borders and between different cultures and languages helps to forge links between peoples.

Weakening public broadcasting means weakening the commitment to a media ecosystem that is pluralist, diverse, inclusive and open to the world. In a world dominated by powerful multinationals that reduce public space and promote dominant discourses and sometimes even fake news and/or extreme hate speech, public broadcasting is an actor that guarantees a space accessible to all citizens and allowing the expression of voices, stories and themes that reflect the diversity of our societies.

In recent years, successive governments have weakened the editorial independence and financial viability of French public broadcasting by multiplying budget cuts and abolishing the licence fee model, thereby calling into question the scope of the public service media's 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 stable, dynamic, long-term funding to meet the challenges facing public broadcasting today and in the future.

The proposed reform, currently being debated in parliament, risks further undermining the independence of France's public broadcasting service, destabilizing teams and disrupting work organization by forcing a merger whose sole aim is to achieve economies of scale. The reform is a source of uncertainty and concern for staff who

have undergone multiple reforms and restructurings, and who risk seeing their working conditions deteriorate if the new project goes ahead.

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

We support the French 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 guarantee editorial independence and pluralism of information
- ✓ To ensure a transparent democratic debate on all channels, with the full involvement of workers and their representatives
- ✓ To preserve of employment and improvement of working conditions
- ✓ To ensure the continuation of conventional cover for employees as a minimum basis for any developments
- ✓ To halt outsourcing, casualization and subcontracting