

2002 NEWS ARCHIVE

Závěry mezinárodní konference MEI o veřejnoprávním vysílání, konané v Aténách - anglická verze

EURO-MEI Conference on Public Service Broadcasting,

Athens, 15 and 16 June 2002

Public Service Broadcasting for Citizens

Euro-MEI, the European Region of Media and Entertainment International which represents among others professionals employed in European public broadcasting organizations, expresses the deep concern of all its affiliated organizations regarding the future of public service broadcasting in a competitive environment particularly in view of the industrial restructuring of the audiovisual sector, the emergence of a global media system and renewed attacks on PSB. Our concern for public service broadcasting goes beyond rightfully defending our jobs and salaries, which are affected by the overall deregulation of industrial relations.

We reaffirm our commitment to defend public service broadcasting:

- As a vital element of democracy committed to provide a service of quality, diversity and objectivity to the general public, which it aims to inform, educate and entertain.
- For its added value in enhancing social cohesion and the cultural diversity across integrated Europe.
- As the only guarantee, which provides access for citizens to quality programming and objective information against the increasing commercialism in the media.

We stress that, particularly in view of the alarming trend of media concentration and cross-ownership, public service broadcasting needs distinct support in terms of policy at national and European level since it increasingly will have to co-exist in competition with a handful of mega-cartels that aggressively move to control the market. In this context, future revised treaties of the European Union and other relevant legislation and policy documents should include a clear commitment to sustain public service broadcasting.

We call upon the European convention to integrate the Amsterdam Protocol into the future constitutional texts of the European Union. Furthermore, we call on the European Commission to elaborate a proposal for a directive on media concentration, as recommended by the European Parliament and the Social and Economic Committee.

We consider the political, financial and editorial independence of PSB organisations as a vital prerequisite for fulfilling its unique function. Consequently legal and organisational structures providing for independence and accountability as well as allowing for modern management techniques vital for viability in an environment of fierce competition should exist across Europe

We reiterate the need to ensure for PSB stable and consistent public funding as well as advertising - a transparent mixed funding system which irrespective of its form; is essential to maintain its remit and extend it to cover the new products and services of the digital age. Given its social and cultural significance, its distinct mission, its impact in terms of European production, investment and employment, the proper funding of public service broadcasting, cannot be construed as unfair competition

We underline that the accurate definition of public broadcasting service and the correct assessment of the basic service it provides is a policy priority. This cannot be limited to general programming obligations but must include the total of new services. Public service broadcasting is not a service of general economic interest, as the Commission wants it, but a service of general democratic interest.

We call for measures that will counteract the adverse effects of deregulation on employment and prevent public service broadcasting from becoming an area of social dumping.

Public service broadcasting must maintain the high standards of working and training conditions that have contributed in the making of a distinguished European broadcasting tradition.

Euro-MEI will continue efforts, specifically work, campaign and seek alliances towards reaffirming within the information society the concept of democracy, culture and high quality service associated with public service broadcasting and towards protecting the interests of public broadcasting workers Specifically develop a:

A RENEWED STRATEGY FOR THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT WITH A VIEW TO SAFEGUARD EMPLOYMENT

Despite the increased consensus on the need to support public service broadcasting in the new age, the employment dimension is regrettably played down or omitted by employers and policy makers alike. Despite

objectives, common to workers and employers relating to the defence of public service broadcasting, employers have targeted restructuring mainly against the workforce. A renewed trade union strategy should:

Put employment at the centre of a renewed public service broadcasting strategy with a view to counteract the adverse effects of globalisation on employment and prevent public broadcasting from becoming a sector of social dumping where insecurity and inferior working standards prevail.

Study and monitor across Europe the qualitative and quantitative effects of different aspects of the problem: redundancy, job insecurity, intensification / flexibility, deskilling, training, social rights, industrial relations, professional standards, equal opportunities, health & safety.

Give particular attention to represent workers in all forms of atypical work and improve and protect their social rights demanding equal rights and access their access to training, career and pension benefits with permanent workers.

Work towards increasing the effectiveness and the visibility at all fronts in Europe of the trade union movement and build cross-sectoral alliances as well as alliances with other social groups or movements.

Intensify efforts aimed at organising new affiliates, exchanging information, coordination and solidarity at a European level between affiliated unions exploiting the synergy potential of an integrated labour organisation such as UNI.

Develop a new outlook for European social dialogue, which remain at the core of our strategy but is important for conveying the message that quality in employment is a prerequisite of quality in broadcasting and that public service broadcasting must maintain the high standards of working and training conditions that have contributed in the making an exceptional broadcasting tradition.

A working group will undertake to elaborate step by step this strategy and propose concrete steps of implementation as the need arises.

Public Service Broadcasting Conference Athens, 15-16 June 2002

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PAPER PRESENTED AT CONFERENCE :

Dear Colleagues and friends:

I have the honour to give you the best regards on behalf of the trade unions associated in the National Trade Union of Mass Media in the Czech Republic, established at 27 February 1990 and affiliated to the Media and Entertainment sector of UNI (UNI-MEI).

Our National Trade Union operates in the Czech dual system of broadcasting as a representative of the public media sector.

By the end of the year 2000 had emerged especial problems in the public sector. Workers of the Czech television were on strike for editorial independence. Instead of Christmas at home they were at their workplaces and lead wage against politically motivated effort to have public broadcasting under control of political interests or under control of private corporation. It was not only idle misgiving, the effort to start privatisation of the Czech TV had noticed publicly in writing the president of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic Mr. Klaus himself on 18.12.2000.

After call a strike on the 31 December 2000 by leaders of the Free Trade Unions of the Czech TV started well known sequence of events, which were observed all over the world thanks to the focus of world media agencies. The most visible was occupational strike in the newsroom of Prague TV. In the course of strike more and more workers of the Czech TV joined to strike. The total number of strikers in the Czech TV exceeded 2400 persons.

In these critical days we ask UNI-MEI and affiliates for support in any way. From the centre of UNI-MEI our call for support was distributed to affiliates and we were obtaining every day letters of favour and solidarity.

In this context I would like once again on behalf of our union to give thanks to all affiliates which send us letters of solidarity in these ultracritical days.

Special thanks in behalf of all members of our Trade Unions are for Mr. Jim Wilson, Director of UNI-MEI sector. Thank to his interest and credit all the Europe got to learn about our conflict with establishment and that fact reinforced us well in our struggle and it was eminently positive asset not only in the course of strike but as well for final result. His personal presence in Prague in the days, when the situation was culminating, contribute significantly to final resolution. He visited strikers in the TV facilities in Prague and was appearing as a guest in the Czech Republic most watched TV-news magazine programme "21". On the victorious meeting 9 February 2001 he addressed about 2000 persons in the ground floor of the building of Czech TV.

The Czech media workers' strike, supported with solidarity of other public media and with all National Unions in the Czech Republic, was officially called off at midnight 10 February, after when Chamber of Deputies choose the new director of the Czech TV, which has signed after his accession to his function agreement on the termination of the strike including commitment to fulfil substantial requirements on the side of the strikers.

This was happy end of the strike, but the fight for filling of the signed agreements will be on the go, in virtue of present tendencies some of the politicians to make revenge. One of the most significant results of the strike is surely the fact, that not only workers but public have realised the force and irreplaceable importance of Trade Unions in the function of legal representatives of workers in the cases of conflict with employers.

The next actions for defence of professional interests, independence of media and as well freedom of speech following after the events in the Czech TV even in other not only post-communist countries are one of the evident proof of this fact. Therefore, Trade Union of Mass Media will rate in the future the effort for independence of public media sector with dual system of TV and radio broadcasting as a significant priority.

Tendencies of politicians to preserve his impact on radio and TV public broadcasting are persistent and are applied mainly by means of economic pressure. Reflection of these efforts is current critical situation in the Czech TV, which existence is according to acknowledgement of the general director guaranteed only to the end of this year.

We hope that chance is in elections which will take place on 14. – 15. 6. 2002. In case of the fall of the expected changes is imminent risk of breakdown of radio and TV public broadcasting in the Czech Republic TV.

Thank you for your attention.

TRADE UNION OF MASS MEDIA

CZECH REPUBLIC

Aktuální informace z UNI

Securing Employment for Workers and Pluralism in the Media

After weeks of negotiations, creditor banks and minority shareholders failed to reach agreement on a rescue plan for Kirch Media and the group filed for bankruptcy.

The UNI Management Committee expresses its solidarity with the media workers at Kirch and fully supports ver.di's call for a round table seeking to secure employment for the workers in the company during the difficult period or restructuring of the company. Employment security must be a key priority of the restructuring plan.

Deregulation and a laissez-faire policy in the face of a media concentration process are at the origin of Kirch's bankruptcy. Instead of creating a competitive and pluralistic media landscape in Europe, national and EU deregulation of the media helped to create an oligopolistic market structure, giving birth to a scenario in which vertical integrated companies dominate the markets and leave no place for competition and more employment in the different branches of the media sector. The bankruptcy of Kirch underlines the dangers, which media concentration bears, not only threatening media pluralism, but also the growth and competitiveness of the audiovisual sector and employment.

With globalisation, concentration of the media has become a global and European problem. Responding to growing danger of media concentration and deregulation in Europe, measures need to be taken at EU level to prevent a further acceleration of media concentration. European competition law is not enough to ensure media pluralism. Sector specific regulation needs to be applied at EU and national level in order to ensure prospects for growth and employment in the European audiovisual sector. We call on the European Union to establish barriers for media ownership and cross-ownership at the EU level in a European Directive on Media Ownership.