

2005 NEWS ARCHIVE

Press Release EURO-MEI General Assembly in Budapest, 29 May 2005

Press Release

Brussels, 3 June 2005

EURO-MEI General Assembly Reaffirms Commitment to Solidarity and Organising

The 4th EURO-MEI General Assembly was held in Budapest, 28 and 29 May 2005. Károly Dúló from the Hungarian Cinema Union and László Gyimesi from the Confederation of Arts Unions welcomed over hundred representatives from media and entertainment workers' unions throughout Europe. The Assembly reviewed the EURO-MEI policies and put forward a new programme of activities for the next for years and elected a new Executive Committee. The Assembly re-elected EURO-MEI President Marc Kerki, ACOD-VRT, Belgium. Heinrich Bleicher-Nagelsmann, VERDI, Germany; Gerry Morrissey, BECTU, UK; Susanne Bækgaard, FAF, Denmark and Daniel Olmos, FCT-CC.OO, Spain were elected Vice-Presidents. Resolutions on employment and working conditions, cultural diversity and on major EU policies (e.g. services directive, working time directive and the review of the television without frontiers directive) were adopted.

The liberalisation process aimed at facilitating the movement of workers and services should not, under any circumstances, be used as a pretext to introduce deregulation in a sector so fragile as the cultural sector, underlines the resolution on the services directive. EURO-MEI wants the media and culture to be excluded from a future services directive. UNI-Europa's Regional Secretary Bernadette Ségol promised that UNI-Europa would continue its campaign on the services directive. ETUC's Józef Niemiec introduced the Assembly's discussion on the working time directive and thanked EURO-MEI for its support of the ETUC campaign. The European labour movement is campaigning for the phasing-out of the opt-out and opposes moves to relax the way the existing European Union ceiling of a 48-hour working week is calculated. EURO-MEI also adopted a resolution on the upcoming review of the television without frontiers directive calling for a proactive policy in support of distribution of European programmes within the EU. EURO-MEI has been very active during the last years contributing to the reviews undertaken by the

Commission and will continue to campaign for a stronger EU instrument covering all European audiovisual services.

A growing concentration of media ownership poses a threat to Europe's cultural diversity. The Assembly urged the European Commission to do more to ensure a genuine choice for the public through a new Directive and called for steps to protect cultural diversity. EURO-MEI adopted a resolution in support of an International Convention on cultural diversity to give states the fundamental right to determine their own cultural policies, after listening to the reports from Jim McKee, Coalition for Cultural Diversity and Debora Abramowicz, SACD on the ongoing negotiations. The resolution was sent immediately to the UNESCO conference held in Paris at the same time.

The Assembly also assessed the work of the two EU social dialogue committees EURO-MEI is involved in: live performance and audiovisual. Anneli Sillanpaa from the Directorate of Employment and Social Affairs underlined the Commission's priority aiming at facilitating the elaboration of European agreements between social partners. Thomas Dayan from the International Federation of Musicians emphasised the need to tackle also difficult issues in order to achieve progress in the social dialogue committees. UNI-MEI's Johannes Studinger thanked affiliates for their input and commitment reminding that "we need patience and determination in order to make both committees successful tools for Europe and for media and entertainment workers." Delegates approved the proposal for a new initiative on health and safety in the live performance sector and called on the committee representatives to continue to work towards a working structure in the audiovisual sector, which would allow to focus equally on film production as well as on broadcasting.

A large part of the discussion was centred on future strategies in order to improve employment and working conditions of media and entertainment workers in Europe. The Assembly agreed to launch solidarity campaigns and projects to clearly establish the right of all workers in media, entertainment and the arts to join trade unions and new organising initiatives by national unions and EURO-MEI. Because many workers in this sector are freelance - and many are treated as self employed or small companies by national laws - they face limits on exercising fundamental rights to join unions and to be covered by collective bargaining. On behalf of the EURO-MEI Management Committee Martin Spence, BECTU called on the sector to "organise, organise and organise" and to be creative in organising an industry that embraces permanent staff, freelance staff who can have many employers and creative artists who may never have an employer. EURO-MEI Vice-President Susanne Bækgaard emphasised that EURO-MEI has to evolve and follow the industry development. Thus policies and activities for animation and multimedia workers, which are represented by a growing number of affiliates, will be developed in the

future. UNI-MEI Director, Jim Wilson said that EURO-MEI will support affiliates' organising campaign and carry out projects to facilitate organising in new areas.

The EURO-MEI General Assembly expressed its solidarity with colleagues at the BBC - who are currently fighting plans by their own management to cut nearly 4,000 jobs and impose big budget cuts. Media, entertainment and arts delegates in Budapest backed an emergency motion. BECTU welcomes recent progress in negotiations - which headed off further strikes - but accused BBC managers of seeing their status as dependent on being seen to be hard on people who already work hard for the corporation. In his closing remarks, Assembly chair and EURO-MEI Vice-President Heinrich Bleicher-Nagelsmann underlined the importance of the BBC struggle for the European media sector and all media workers. "The BBC is the model for public service broadcasting and quality programming to which BBC staff has contributed a lot. The BBC plans to cut employment will impact negatively on the quality and are a bad signal across Europe" Bleicher-Nagelsmann said. The BBC must invest in its best value the creative and technical workers who have made the BBC success possible. EURO-MEI will make its campaign in support of the UK media union's actions its number one priority in the coming weeks and months, he concluded.

For more information on the EURO-MEI General Assembly go to:

www.union-network.org/mei

Executive Committee of EURO-MEI elected 29 May 2005

(Mandate for Four Years)

Management Committee:

President: Marc Kerki, ACOD-VRT, Belgium

Vice Presidents: Heinrich Bleicher-Nagelsmann, VER.DI, Germany

Gerry Morrissey, BECTU, UK

Susanne Baekgaard, FAF, Denmark

Daniel Olmos, FCT-CC.OO, Spain

Secretary: William Maunier, SNRT-CGT, France

Financial Liaison Officer: Heinz Fiedler, KMfSB, Austria

European Representative on World Executive: Roger Bolton, BECTU, UK

Other Executive Committee Members:

Titular: Louis Heinsman, FNV-KIEM, Netherlands

Alternate: Jean-Paul Van Der Vurst , ACV Transcom, Belgium

Titular: Gun Karlsson, SIF, Sweden

Alternate: Lars Åström, TF, Sweden

Titular: Simonetta Corsi, UILCOM, Italy

Alternate: Károly Dúló, SAECH, Hungary

Titular: Antonin Dekoj, ITU CT, Czech Republic

Alternate: Zoran Djuricic, GS KiU, Serbia and Montenegro

Titular: Françoise Chazaud, FASAP-FO, France

Alternate: Stéphane Pozderec, SNTPCT, France

Titular: Usa Beer, VERDI, Germany

Alternate: Graham Lester George, WGGB, UK

Titular: Aldis Misevic, LKDAF, Latvia

Alternate: Juozas Neverauskas, LRT, Lithuania

Titular: Tom Mauss, SSFV, Switzerland

Alternate: Jimmy Jordan, SIPTU, Ireland

UNI has given its backing to unions at the BBC

BBC unions call for more talks

UNI has given its backing to unions at the BBC in the UK who are fighting plans to cut up to 4,000 jobs. 13,000 members took part in a one-day strike on May 23. Further action was suspended to allow talks but - although > progress has been made on areas threatened with privatisation - the BBC has not gone far enough to avoid compulsory redundancies elsewhere. The three unions - affiliates BECTU and Amicus plus the journalists - are calling for more talks or action could resume. The

Euro-MEI General Assembly in Budapest backed an emergency solidarity motion after an impassioned plea from BBC worker Jane Perry.

Emergency rezolution for BBC

General Assembly EURO-MEI-UNI

Budapest, 28-29 May 2005

We, the representatives of media and entertainment unions of Europe, express our solidarity with colleagues in the U.K. who are fighting against job losses, cuts and privatizations in the BBC. We congratulate them for the concessions they have already won by their recent strike and support their continued long struggle.

Declaration Executive Committee Independent Trade Union of the Czech TV in Prague

Dear colleagues,

we are deeply affected by the latest events running in present days in BBC. The ground of our closed spiritual connection with our friends in Great Britain is simple. We understand well their starting fight for preservation of respect and independence of basic public service broadcaster. Quite similar practice eight years ago started destruction of the Czech television in the Czech Republic.

Back then, through the Czech TV Council manipulated with some of the Czech politicians it was not only liquidated the existing management of Czech TV but even further, the provision on the inflationary escalation of TV charges was eliminated from the draft of Act. Hereby the Czech TV became in fact the hostage of parliament and it was only the question of time, when will be fulfilled the intention bring it to obedience via economic pressure. Direct attack of the politicians in over run 2000/2001 with aim to have control over public TV by way of appointed and controlled management, was failed due to protest and strike Czech TV workers supported by the majority of the Czech public. Therefore, they tried to reach it via economic throttle of cumbersome medium. It is longer way but guaranteed.

Likewise in the case of BBC, at the beginning of sneaking liquidation of Czech TV we can hear soaring and no concrete speeches on a necessity of reduction of personell, naked proclamations without appropriate analysis about more effective economy and ultimately the call for explicit proof that all conceivable reserves were depleted. Understandable. The aim is to

reach in the end a stage in which is the Czech TV the plaything in hands of politicians, completely subordinated to their arbitrariness. We are afraid, the time is coming and under these circumstances it is illusory to speak about any independence of public media.

In the practice it looked as follows: If the TV charge was 75,- CZK (monthly) in 1997 only 0,78% current average wages and in comparison with other European countries was one of lowest, then at present the same 75,- CZK is only 0,40% current average wages! Thereat in the period 1997 – 2003 inflation in the Czech Republic was more than 30% and real value of 75,- CZK in 2003 (1,7 EUR) is equal to 50,- CZK in 1997. When we take into account the fact that the dissemination of signal costs, energie costs and even tax burden of the Czech TV raised more than 30% inflation rate, it is no wonder that economically mined Czech TV has no more the ability to resist an influence of politicians on its activities.

It is still a little for Mr. Topolánek, chairman of opposite political party ODS with one third of election preference and therefore the most probable the winner in next parliamentary elections. In his recent wording he drew up his view about next dark existence or rather absence of the Czech TV after elections in 2006. One of the two as yet broadcasted programs will be promptly cancelled on account of exceedingly entertaining and the second will broadcast mainly the telecasts of private broadcasters, which will be in opinion of government (!) fulfill correctly needs of public service. Why will the next government authorize telecastings for broadcasting? Clearly, because it will allocate money for production of choosed telecastings!

Dear colleagues, the description of our eight-years effort for preservation of the independence of the Czech TV does not mean that it is our resignation. Until the view of Mr. Topolánek is not realized, it is still the possibility reverse the course of events. This letter is rather effort to show you, to which end can bring initially decent attacks on the position of public broadcaster. And as well it is expression of belief that problems in one part of our common house – EU can find his image away.

Executive Committee

Independent Trade Union

of the Czech TV in Pratur

UNI-MEI calls to support UK media unions strike at BBC

UNI-MEI calls on all Affiliates to support UK media unions strike at BBC starting on 23 May

Dear Colleagues,

The UK media unions have named May 23 as the first in four days of strike action against cuts and privatisation at the BBC. Representatives of BECTU, NUJ, and Amicus, meeting in London after a decisive vote for industrial action by members, called for a 24-hour stoppage, from midnight to midnight.

Unions plan to mount picket lines outside BBC buildings. A further 48-hour stoppage is planned for May 31 and June 1, followed by another 24-hour stoppage within the following week. Officials will meet at the beginning of June to decide further dates if necessary. Three key union demands were turned down by Director-General Mark Thompson at a summit meeting on April 12, leading to industrial action ballots across the BBC, and in the two wholly-owned subsidiaries threatened with privatisation.

After the announcement of cuts of nearly 4000 jobs the media unions had demanded

1. A 90-day moratorium on actions proposed by BBC Director-General Mark Thompson. During this time management would have to consult with the unions as a bloc as to why any sackings were necessary and how the BBC is to carry out its mandate by sacking more than 10% of its staff and hiving off still more services to separate entities.
2. If there are any redundancies, they must be achieved by normal decreases in the workforce or voluntary departures: no compulsory layoffs.
3. While outsourcing of any members' jobs are opposed, if any are outsourced it must be under conditions of protection for present standards.
4. BBC must clarify now its intentions regarding the global news division, including World Service.

Unions are planning to mount picket lines at all BBC buildings during the strike, and hope to continue recruiting new members in the days leading up to the stoppage. During the campaign to win a yes vote in the industrial action ballots, many meetings of members in BBC workplaces

attracted the highest attendance for several years, and BECTU alone reported a surge of more than 1000 BBC staff joining the union.

The cuts not only threaten employment but will impact heavily on the quality of the world most renowned public service broadcaster. If the cuts would come through 80% of the staff would be required to do same amount of work. This drop in quality would also undermine the level of the licence fees UK citizens pay for good public service broadcasting.

The BBC has always been the best public service broadcaster and a model for public broadcasting throughout the world. It always set the standard. The management plans are not only a disaster for the future of employment and quality of the UK public broadcasting system but a very bad signal to Europe and the World's public broadcasting organisations., UNI-MEI Director Jim Wilson said.

UNI affiliates and friends are urged to continue to send letters of protest, as can be done automatically by using the form letter and facilities provided on the UNI-MEI website.

Affiliates are also asked to send letters of support with respect to the strike to BECTU Assistant General Secretary Gerry Morrissey at gmorrissey@bectu.org.uk

Download UNI-MEI letter of support here:

(See attached file: jw-rb-20-5-05.pdf)

Best regards,

Johannes

uni-mei online: <http://www.union-network.org/mei>

Johannes Studinger

Deputy Director

UNI-MEI

Media, Entertainment & Arts Sector of Union Network International

31, rue de l'Hôpital

B-1000 Brussels

Tel. +32 2 234 56 52

Fax. +32 2 235 08 61

Zoé Lanara President

Jim Wilson Director

Roger Bolton

General Secretary

Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph & Theatre Union

BECTU

373-377 Clapham Road

London SW9 9BT

gmorrissey@bectu.org.uk

Concerns: BBC Strike

Brussels, 20 May 2005

Dear Roger,

I would like to express on behalf of all UNI-MEI affiliates representing 250 000 media and entertainment workers around the world our solidarity and support to BECTU and the other media unions. Your strike, which will start on 23 of May is not only a strike against 4000 job cuts and for employment at BBC but also a fight for high quality UK public service broadcasting.

This strike concerns all public service broadcasting workers around the world, since the BBC has always been the model for public broadcasting. The plans of the BBC management would have a disastrous effect on the prospects of the future of public service broadcasting in Europe and the world.

UNI-MEI urges the BBC management to truly live up to its commitment to assure the rights of BBC workers in transformation through full negotiations with the unions, to reconsider its proposals and to temper

them with greater concern for the immediate effects and for the long range strategy for the preservation of public service broadcasting.

In solidarity,

Jim Wilson, UNI-MEI Director

Rue de l'hôpital, 31 – 1000 Brussels – Belgium Tel: (+32-2) 234 56 50 –
Fax: (+32-2) 235 08 61 E-mail: jim.wilson@union-network.org – Web
site: <http://www.union-network.org/mei>