



Public Broadcasting for All *Campaign*

Media Release

27 January 2005

European Journalists Call for Manifesto of Public Service Values In 2005 Broadcasting Battle

The European Federation of Journalists has called on politicians, public authorities and civil society groups to unite around a manifesto of public service values in defence of the European model of public service broadcasting.

In a statement issued today the EFJ says 2005 will be a crucial year in the struggle to defend public broadcasting, which faces new threats from trade liberalisation and political spin-doctors trying to manipulate public opinion.

“In 2005 the fight for pluralism and quality will define the struggle over the future of broadcasting,” says the EFJ, which says public broadcasting is under attack in almost every country of the region.

“We insist that the first principles of democracy and free expression are the driving force of European media. We need a manifesto of public service values that will not be sacrificed for commercial or political self interest.”

The EFJ says key values that made Europe the world’s leader in public broadcasting are under threat of political and corporate interference.

“Increasing pressure on public finances and the liberalisation of trade have had a negative impact on media all over Europe,” says the EFJ. Private media companies, desperate to maximise market share and increase commercial revenues, are seeking the end of all public funding for broadcasting. “If this happens European democracy will be the loser and quality will suffer,” says the EFJ.

The EFJ calls on political parties and national parliaments across Europe to adopt a Manifesto of Public Service Values for broadcasting that reaffirms:

- Access for all to a range of high quality programmes, providing impartial news and information and programmes free from political and commercial pressures;
- Pluralism and Quality and voices for all sections of the community;
- Ownership in public hands and management that is financially transparent and accountable to the public;

- Funding which guarantees freedom from commercial and political control and involves license fees or other independent public funding not subject to political manipulation.
- Fairness at work, social justice and rights protection for journalists and all who work in the industry.

“These are the basic principles that underpin public service values in media,” says the EFJ. The EFJ plans to join with the International Federation of Journalists to reinvigorate a global *Public Service Broadcasting For All Campaign*. New demands will be made on governments and civil society groups to take up the fight to defend public broadcasting.

The EFJ call for action comes after a year in which a growing crisis for public broadcasting has enveloped many countries of the European Union. “The broadcasting crisis has deepened in the newly-enlarged Europe. None of the state networks in the new member states has successfully made the transition to a genuinely public broadcasting system. As a result, the European public service model has been weakened.”

Further evidence of weakness says the EFJ is found in the difficulties facing many of the bigger and more established broadcasters.

“Even major players like the BBC, which announced almost 3,000 job cuts just a few weeks ago and is facing a major struggle over its Charter renewal next year, are under intolerable pressure. And in France, Spain, Portugal, Denmark, Italy and Germany, there are battles over the future of public broadcasting. It is time for politicians at home and across the European Union to defend public service values.”

The EFJ says that technological change should be the springboard for a new era of public service and that digitalization, while changing the way media professionals work, should also lead to improved working conditions and better quality programming.

“Instead, broadcast journalists find their jobs are less secure, they have to develop many new skills to accomplish tasks in a converged multimedia environment, and their intellectual property rights are undermined as media plunder their work for reuse and redistribution in new information systems,” says the EFJ. “That must change. We must use technology to liberate journalism, to provide more opportunities for investigative reporting and, above all, to improve the scope, reach and quality of programming.”

The EFJ recognises that while a commercially-driven media market cannot guarantee *per se* a pluralistic media landscape, it is absolutely essential for a public broadcasting system to be clearly separate from state influence in order to provide diverse information, culture and quality content to citizens.

The EFJ says the European Union, despite a legal basis for the protection of public broadcasting and cultural diversity, has not done enough to defend public service values.

“Public broadcasting is about people and about their right to independent, quality oriented and pluralistic information,” says the EFJ. “The European Union must put media pluralism and quality back on the agenda.”

The EFJ says it will campaign vigorously during 2005 to fight off attacks by private media companies, and to ensure that public service values are restored to the heart of broadcasting policy – both within the public sector and within the private media.

“European citizens deserve the best that democracy can provide – and that means a broad range of opinions, distilled through a high-quality system of professional and creative media which are sensitive to citizens’ needs and public service values. In 2005 journalists’ groups around Europe will take up this challenge.”

More information :

www.ifj-europe.org