



**European  
Federation  
of Journalists**

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Dear XX,

### **Europe's Media Crisis: Time for Political Action/ Request for a Meeting**

We write to you on behalf of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), the regional group of the International Federation of Journalists representing over 260.000 journalists in Europe.

This year will see a new European Parliament and a new Commission and, for the first time, journalists will not just be interested in covering the elections, nominations and appointments.

They also have a question of their own: when is the European Union going to wake up to the crisis facing media in Europe?

Over the past months, the decline of journalism and media has been dramatically accelerating as a result of the recent economic downturn.

However, the media crisis we are witnessing in every country of Europe has been years in the making and predates the recent recession.

Media markets are collapsing. The flight of advertising to the Internet and a new generation of users who have less time for newspapers and traditional television have caused panic in the media industry which is cutting jobs and slashing editorial costs at the expense of quality journalism.

The crisis is having a dramatic impact on media coverage of the political, social and democratic life of Europe. The balance between private sector media and publicly-funded outlets, broadcasting in particular, which has traditionally provided pluralist and diverse information services to European citizens is seriously disturbed.

There is no longer any certainty that media pluralism can be assured. The private sector is no longer able to guarantee the provision of information services, in the public interest, that have been central to preserving and enhancing standards on democracy in Europe.

At the same time, the public broadcasting landscape is in a crisis of its own, and is still subject to undue political pressures. In this regard we draw your attention to the recent

report *“Television across Europe. More Channels, Less Independence”* published by the Open Society Institute, which reveals how in Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Republic of Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia the crisis of independence is acute. In the heartlands of European media – the UK, Germany, France and the Nordic regions – both public and private media are equally under extraordinary pressure.

This is not a short-term crisis. The extent of the collapse of traditional media in the United States has already caused enormous shock both to media practitioners and public bodies. And there is little doubt, sooner rather than later, that Europe, too, will face the consequences of market restructuring.

The European Federation of Journalists has been in conversation with European publishers and broadcasters, from both the private and public sectors, about these matters. We have launched a continental campaign to revive commitments to public service values in media and ethical journalism. We ask you to look at our efforts in this direction – see [www.ethicaljournalisminitiative.org](http://www.ethicaljournalisminitiative.org).

We are convinced that the new Commission and the newly-elected Parliament must seize the opportunity of a change of administration to launch a public debate, at national and European level, about the future of media in Europe.

This debate must not focus only on communications policy or technical issues arising from the technological convergence of telephony, broadcasting, print and digital media. These are important, but the critical and historical challenge is to confront the future role of media in contributing to democracy, pluralism and public engagement in the political life of Europe.

For this reason we believe that new and creative thinking is needed. We must examine how the architecture of European politics and the structure of the European Commission do not permit a proper and integrated examination of media policy and a mechanism for developing new initiatives that will guide member states in their navigation of the uncertainties created by the media crisis.

We believe it is time for an urgent and profound debate within European society on this issue. This debate and the policy programme that is required to drive it forward must be guided by the wisdom of political leaders who are aware of the consequences of change and ready to intervene to preserve media pluralism as a cornerstone of European democracy.

We are aware that the European Treaties do not consider media and culture as an exclusive EU competence, and we also know that a strong debate is taking place about state assistance to broadcasters in the framework of the EU competition policy. However, these talks do not get to the heart of the problem. They tinker with one aspect of media activity when the whole media industry is in need of review and reinvigoration.

We are all aware that democracy requires the provision of reliable, accurate and useful information as a public good. This implies that we need people and resources to produce and circulate it. We believe that journalism and media professionalism which is the creative heart of European media must be protected, nourished and encouraged to develop.

But who will pay for it in an age when the information revolution has created an abundance of information, much of it trivial, unreliable and self-regarding, and which has created a new generation unwilling to pay? What are the options for revisiting the relationship between the state and media in terms of funding for information services from public resources? How can this be done without compromising the fundamental principles of editorial independence?

At the same time, multimedia convergence requires new models of governance. Press council and broadcast media councils and different forms of self-regulation, co-regulation and legally-binding rules. Existing structures are increasingly made obsolete by the realities of the Internet.

All of these issues require that a new debate – involving all stakeholders in civil society, within media and state authorities – is launched.

Your party has a leading role to play in meeting this challenge in the years ahead, because of your pivotal role in representing the citizens of Europe. For this reason we seek an urgent meeting with you before the end of the current legislative period to discuss how the European Parliament can play its part in taking forward this debate on the future of media in Europe which should be a central part of your work after June.

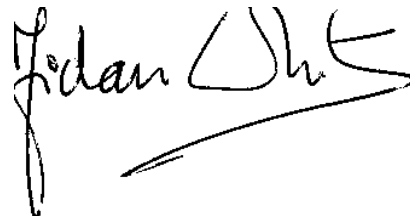
We believe that this issue must also figure strongly in the nomination process for a new Commission to ensure that the Commission itself places the future of media at the heart of the new programme.

We are sorry for this lengthy introduction, but our request is sincere: we believe that political action is needed now to help all of us better understand how to move ahead at this critical moment for the future of media in Europe. We look forward hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,



Arne König,  
EFJ President



Aidan WHITE  
EFJ General Secretary