

EFJ Annual Meeting (AM)  
Zagreb, Croatia  
8-9 October 2021

Resolutions adopted by the AM 2021

**1. On the dissolution of the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ)**

*Tabled by DJV (Germany)*

The annual meeting of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), meeting in Zagreb, Croatia, on 8-9 October 2021,

noting that on 27th August 2021 the Belarusian supreme court dissolved the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ),

noting, that this liquidation of the country's biggest independent journalists' association is the latest part of an ongoing attack on the freedom of the press and the freedom of association in Belarus and leaves journalists with one less option to turn to for support,

noting, that an international coordinated response is required, since Lukashenko has demonstrated his willingness to use drastic measures and that many other non governmental organisations targeted for dissolution,

The EFJ Annual Meeting asks the Steering Committee:

- to urge the European Commission and the European Parliament to impose sanctions on the regime in Belarus so that BAJ can continue its mission;
- to assist BAJ and their members in continuing their work after the ruling of disorganisation from the Belarusian Supreme Court.
- to encourage EFJ members to offer visiting scholarships to Journalists from Belarus That Invite them to their respective Country.

**2. On SLAPPs in Europe**

*Tabled by DJV (Germany)*

The Annual Meeting of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), meeting in Zagreb, Croatia, on 8 and 9 October 2021,

noting that strategic lawsuits against public participation (Slapps) pose a fundamental threat to the journalistic profession, as they directly threaten the profession's core right, the

freedom of speech. As the acronym indicates, a Slapp is a lawsuit that is not filed to defend a plaintiff's right, but to inhibit and stifle independent reporting. In order to achieve this objective, Slapp cases exploit and abuse procedural loopholes. Especially defamation and libel suits are filed in jurisdictions that have no connection to the actual reporting, but might result in long proceedings and could be resource draining for the defendant. This could have extreme chilling effects on reporting, because just one article can lead to years of exhaustive proceedings. When Daphne Caruna Galizia (Malta) was murdered 42 libel suits were pending against her. In a joint hearing of the European Parliament's Legal Affairs and Civil Liberties committee (LIBE), the Swedish journalist Annelie Östlund described what effect legal proceedings initiated against her reporting in London had on herself and her family.

A large number of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) is a serious concern in Croatia as well. According to the latest survey by the Croatian Journalists' Association, there are at least 924 active lawsuits against journalists and media in Croatia, with claims in the amount of almost € 10.5 million. After years of witnessing hundreds of proceedings against journalists, the Croatian judiciary recently went a step further and decided to silence the media directly. The Municipal Civil Court of Zagreb, Croatia, imposed a temporary reporting injunction on the publisher of the news website H-alter following a series of articles about the Child and Youth Protection Centre's work irregularities.

The EFJ Annual Meeting asks the Steering Committee to lobby the Croatian authorities to change the Criminal Law, specifically, the decriminalization of violations of honor and reputation in order to reduce the pressure on the media and journalists.

Considering that the European Commission is preparing some proposals to address the situation as outlined above,

the EFJ Annual Meeting asks the Steering Committee:

- to strengthen the lobbying activities for legislative proposals like an EU-Directive addressing Slapp cases, proposals with the European Commission and the European Parliament to protect journalists from SLAPP;
- to continue the dialogue with the European Commission and the European Parliament to urge them also to take non legislative measures to support journalists facing Slapp cases;
- to monitor and support the implementation of the European Union's anti-SLAPP Directive and its effects of journalism in Europe;
- to call on EFJ affiliates to contact their governments and their national members of the European Parliament in order to convince them to defend journalists against Slapp cases.

### **3. On Pegasus and cyber snooping on Journalists**

*Tabled by NUJ (UK and Ireland). Supported by JUADN (Greece), FAPE (Spain), FESP (Spain), SNJ (France)*

The EFJ Annual Meeting notes with deep concern reports that Pegasus Software, created by the cyber armaments company NSO, has been used to spy on at least 189 journalists. It

notes allegations that the governments of Bahrain, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, UAE, India, Mexico, Hungary, Azerbaijan, Togo and Rwanda have used Pegasus for this purpose.

The EFJ AM affirms its view that for free expression to flourish, journalists must be allowed to protect their contacts and communications with contacts. Snooping of the kind enabled by Pegasus is an anathema to an unfettered media.

This EFJ AM applauds the work of the IFJ's 'Surveillance of Journalists' working group in drawing this issue to wider notice.

This EFJ EM instructs the EFJ steering committee to support the work being done by the SoJ working group by making the case to the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Organisation For Security And Cooperation in Europe that international statutory protections for journalistic material are required. Furthermore, international, inter-governmental bodies should have oversight of the use of tools such as Pegasus that pose a risk to journalism.

This EFJ EM further instructs the EFJ steering committee to encourage and enable affiliates to campaign in their own jurisdictions for robust legal protections against cyber snooping on journalists.

#### **4. On the urgent establishment of the International Commission for the investigation into the Killings and Kidnappings of Journalists in Kosovo from 1998 to 2005**

*Tabled by UNS (Serbia)*

Faced with the tragic fact that for more than two decades no one has been held accountable for 19 of the 20 killings, kidnappings and "disappearances" of Serbian and Albanian journalists and media workers and the German magazine Stern team, between 1998 and 2005 in Kosovo (one murder was solved before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, ICTY);

Noting with concern that no action has been taken to bring the perpetrators to justice even after the Resolution of the Assembly of the European Federation of Journalists adopted in May 2018, calling for a swift and efficient investigation of these crimes;

Disturbed that there were no effective investigations even after information on these crimes was included on the Council of Europe Platform for the Protection of Journalism and the Safety of Journalists in August 2018;

Considering that in December 2018, the OSCE Ministerial Council adopted a Declaration calling for a public and unequivocal condemnation of attacks and violence against journalists and for effective measures to end impunity for crimes against journalists;

Recalling that the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1738 (2006) and 2222 (2015) condemn violence and abuses committed against journalists and media workers in situations of armed conflict, emphasizing international obligations to end impunity and prosecute those responsible for such serious violations of international humanitarian law;

Emphasizing that the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1738 (2006) specifically reminds the signatories of the Geneva Convention of the obligation to seek and prosecute persons who are alleged to have committed or ordered the commission of any act seriously violating these conventions;

Further emphasizing that the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2222 (2015) reaffirms that the parties to an armed conflict bear primary responsibility to take all feasible steps to ensure the protection of those “who exercise their right to freedom of expression by seeking, receiving and disseminating information by different means”, in accordance with Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and that it goes on to emphasize the obligation of member states to conduct impartial, independent and effective investigations and to bring the perpetrators of such crimes to justice;

Noting that the rule of law and the investigation of the killings, kidnappings and „disappearances“ of journalists and media workers was the direct responsibility of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which had executive authority from 1999 to 2008;

Aware that since 2008 executive authority for the rule of law and thus the responsibility for the investigation and prosecution of these crimes passed to the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), which has also not resolved these crimes;

Bearing in mind that the fight against impunity for crimes against journalists and media workers is crucial and essential for the administration of justice, but also necessary for the further protection of media professionals, and that bringing to justice those responsible for these crimes is a key element in preventing future attacks,

The Annual Meeting of the European Federation of Journalists reminds of these facts and calls for the following:

1. Prompt establishment of an International Commission of Experts to investigate the killings, kidnappings and „disappearances“ of journalists and media workers in Kosovo between 1998 and 2005:

- the disappearance of journalist Ismail Bërbatovci on 23 July 1998, when he went on a journalistic assignment;
- the disappearance of Đuro Slavuj and Ranko Perenić, a journalist team of Radio Pristina, who were on a journalistic assignment on 21 August 1998 near Velika Hoča;
- the kidnapping of journalist Nebojša Radošević and photographer Vladimir Dobričić, who were on a journalistic assignment on October 18, 1998 near Pristina;
- the murder of journalist Afrim Maliqi on 2 December 1998 in Pristina;
- the murder of journalist and head of the Kosovo Information Center (KIC) Enver Maloku on 11 January 1999 in Pristina;
- the disappearance of Ljubomir Knežević, correspondent for the Serbian national daily Politika and journalist for Pristina newspaper Jedinstvo, on 6 May 1999, in Vučitrn;
- the murder of two Stern journalists, Gabriel Grüner, Volker Krämer and translator Senol Alit, on 13 June 1999 near Prizren;
- the murder of Aleksandar Simović Sima, a journalist of Media Action International, on 21 August 1999 in Pristina;
- the murder of Krist Gegaj, an editor at RTV Pristina, on 12 September 1999 in Istok;

- the murder of Momir Stokuća, a photojournalist, on 21 September 1999 in Pristina;
- the disappearance of Marjan Melonaši, a journalist with the Serbian newsroom of Radio Kosovo, on 9 September 2000 in Pristina;
- the murder of Shefki Popova, a journalist from Pristina newspaper Rilindja, on 10 September 2000 in Vučitrn ;
- the murder of Xhemal Mustafa, a journalist with the Bota Sot newspaper, on 23 November 2000 in Pristina;
- the murder of Bekim Kastrati, a journalist with the Bota Sot newspaper ,on 19 October 2001 near Pristina,;
- the murder of Bardhyl Ajeti, a journalist and columnist for the Bota Sot newspaper, who was assassinated on 3 June 2005 near Gnjilane and died on 25 June 2005;

2. Inclusion of experts in this field, representatives of the international missions which were the pillars of the rule of law in Kosovo in the mentioned period (UNMIK and EULEX), as well as the representatives of the Prosecutor's Offices of Belgrade and Pristina, in the work of the International Commission of Experts for the Investigation of the killings, kidnappings and "disappearances" of Journalists and Media Workers in Kosovo in the period from 1998 to 2005;

3. The members of the EFJ Steering Committee should actively engage, in cooperation with the EFJ affiliates, in raising awareness and informing the public about 19 unsolved crimes of killings, kidnappings and "disappearances" of journalists and media workers in Kosovo in the period from 1998 to 2005, as well as to actively engage in creating the conditions for the establishment of an International Commission of Experts to investigate these crimes;

4. Direct cooperation between prosecutors from Belgrade and Pristina, or with the mediation of mutually trusted partners, in the investigation of the killings, kidnappings and "disappearances" of journalists and media workers in Kosovo between 1998 and 2005, and to keep the public informed of developments;

5. That the Specialist Chambers for War Crimes in Kosovo, within its mandate, must cover the cases of killed and missing journalists and media workers;

6. That the United Nations implement the conclusions of the United Nations Human Rights Advisory Panel (HRAP) published in the period from 2010 to 2016, in which HRAP found violations of the European Convention on Human Rights in the work of UNMIK, asks for the solving of the cases of killings, kidnappings and „disappearances“ of journalists and media workers during the time when UNMIK was responsible for criminal investigation, and calls on UNMIK to publicly acknowledge its responsibility for the failure to conduct effective criminal investigations during the period of its executive mandate and responsibility;

7. That the United Nations provide compensation to the families of victims, and inform the public thereof;

8. That the EULEX Mission and the EU Council of Ministers, under whose auspices the mandate of EULEX is implemented, has the obligation of informing the public about the reasons why during the EULEX executive rule of law mandate in Kosovo no effective investigations were conducted into the killings, kidnappings and „disappearances“ of

journalists and media workers, committed between 1998 and 2005, and for the EU Council of Ministers to investigate and establish whether, during its period of executive mandate EULEX committed a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights by failing to investigate these crimes;

9. That the EU, which has undertaken to act in accordance with international resolutions, fully respects these resolutions and contributes to the investigations of killed, kidnapped and “disappeared” journalists and media workers in Kosovo, and to inform the public about the steps taken.

The Annual Meeting calls on the EFJ Steering Committee to regularly monitor and inform the public about investigations into these killings, kidnappings and “disappearances”, in cooperation with other organizations, associations, the United Nations, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, the European Union and other international bodies.

## **5. On Press Freedom in France**

*Tabled by SNJ (France)*

With law after law and appeal after appeal, before the Constitutional Council and/or the Council of State, journalists represented by the SNJ are engaged in a veritable arm wrestling match against a government that is trying, by all means, to restrict press freedom in France.

As soon as the wise men of one or other of the assemblies grant our requests, a new bill is put forward, which attempts to circumvent the bans.

Some victories have been achieved.

The SNJ and the SNJ-CGT won against the circular "Schéma national du maintien de l'ordre" (SNMO) which intended, among other things, to control journalists by prior accreditation, by ordering them to disperse like any other demonstrator, whereas journalists are observers.

The famous article 24 of the "Global Security" bill, which was intended to prevent filming and photographing the forces of law and order acting in public places, was cancelled but returned in another, more pernicious form in another law on respect for the principles of the Republic, which has just been passed.

No complaint, although 200 journalists have suffered physical obstruction and sometimes very serious injuries in the exercise of their profession at the hands of the police, has been successful to date.

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), meeting at its Annual Meeting in Zagreb, on 8-9 October 2021, wishes to express its full support to French journalists and the unions which represent them.

The EFJ, which has contributed greatly to the numerous reports of these situations on the Council of Europe's platform "for the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists", will continue to denounce these attacks on the freedom to inform and be informed at the European level and to take concrete action with the European authorities to improve this situation. Emmanuel Macron, who will preside over the Council of the European Union from 1 January on behalf of France, will have to assume his responsibilities.

## **6. On Afghan journalists**

*Tabled by SNJ (France)*

Since the Taliban took Kabul on 15 August, the whole world has been following the terrible situation of defenders of democracy and women day after day.

Journalists are particularly targeted and women journalists in particular.

Fahim Dashty, an Afghan journalist and representative of the journalists' union ANJU (Afghan national journalists union) was killed on Sunday 5 September 2021 in a Taliban attack in Panjshir.

The news that the Taliban have got their hands on Hiide, the American facial recognition arsenal, with all its data, is even more worrying.

The SNJ has undertaken to do all it can to help colleagues who ask for help.

A group of activists has, over the past weeks, begun to respond to all the SOS that have come in from Afghanistan.

A documented list has been drawn up and is constantly updated and sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to remind the French authorities of the commitments they have made publicly. Almost 800 journalists are on the list.

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), meeting at its Annual General Meeting in Zagreb, on 8 and 9 October 2021, commends the IFJ for its extraordinary commitment to this terrible census of more than 2,500 applicants and recalls the support fund it has set up (<https://www.ifj.org/safety-fund.html#c502>).

The Federation urges each of its affiliates to intervene with their governments to ensure that humanitarian visas are issued, in whatever country the applicants may be, and that the best possible reception is given to these exiles of information.

## **7. On the new 'Disinformation Law' planned by Turkey's government**

*Tabled by TGS (Turkey)*

Noting that Turkey's government is reportedly drafting a new bill for "fighting fake news and disinformation";

Recalling that previous legislation, including the Penal Law, Anti-Terror Law, and the Internet Law, has been systematically used by Turkish authorities for political persecution on free speech and journalistic activities;

Deeply disturbed that the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has so far failed to consult civil society, including journalists' organisations, and the opposition, for the preparation of the new bill;

The EFJ Annual Meeting urgently asks the Steering Committee:

- to condemn Turkey's government over its ongoing lack of transparency and accountability in a key legislative process that may severely affect the democratic rights of the public, including the journalists;
- to urge Turkey's government to immediately start a dialogue with journalists and the civil society before presenting the aforementioned bill to the parliament;
- and to call Turkey's government to refrain from taking any more legislative and administrative steps that may further censorship and self-censorship on digital media.

## **8. On the need to stand by Slovenian media workers**

*Tabled by SNS and DNS (Slovenia)*

The situation is serious, the staff at the Slovenian Press Agency (STA) warned nine months ago, after the Slovenian government halted the financing of the agency's public service in January 2021. The Slovenian public delivered a strong message in support of the preservation and development of public service media with the crowdfunding campaign *Za obSTAnek*. After nearly a year of government blackmail, the situation is now alarming. The STA is left with two options: either it signs a damaging agreement, or it enters receivership.

The government is flouting the law in demanding changes in the performance of public service established over many years. The government decree, and by extension the proposed public service agreement, could completely upend the valuation, financing and use of the services provided by the STA. It could undermine the balance between public and commercial revenue, a balance which has allowed the STA to offer a high-quality news service to its end-users while fostering strong in-house development. After a tenth of news staff left the agency in recent months, the director announced his resignation a few days ago. All this is happening against the backdrop of persistent efforts by the government to break, symbolically and financially, the information backbone of the Slovenian media environment, its professional integrity, editorial independence and institutional stability.

"The situation is no longer just serious, we are at the cusp of financial collapse," the STA staff have warned. "We expect those responsible to urgently resolve the situation." The EFJ General Assembly joins the appeal by the staff and demands that the Slovenian government immediately restore funding of the public service, which the STA has been performing throughout this time. It must also settle all outstanding liabilities. This is the only way for the government to ensure compliance with the law, secure uninterrupted funding of the agency, and respect the citizens' right to be informed.

The stability of public broadcaster RTV Slovenija is jeopardised as well. Consecutive governments have refused to increase the licence fee and Slovenia's largest public service media outlet is now generating losses, putting at risk jobs, its institutional autonomy, and its editorial independence. The government has sought to gain control with staffing decisions that have been declared unlawful by courts. Senior government representatives have publicly called for the dismantling of the financing system, the broadcaster and its journalists have been targets of verbal and even physical violence. What is more, the government has been shunning its responsibility and has failed to honour a 2018 Strike Agreement under



which the broadcaster is entitled to additional funding as part of broader public-sector salary increases. The government is obligated by the RTV Slovenija Law to provide appropriate conditions for the performance of public service, which is why the General Assembly urges the government to honour its legal obligations and secure the financial stability and editorial independence of RTV Slovenija.

The EFJ General Assembly expresses solidarity with the staff at the STA and RTV Slovenija and joins their demands for the preservation of the independence of public service media, for respect of their rights, and for a safe and stable work environment, which is a precondition for quality journalism in the public interest.

Alas, journalists at public service media are not the only targets of verbal and physical assaults, slanderous campaigns and threats. The EFJ General Assembly therefore calls on the Slovenian government to stop contributing to an environment in which verbal and physical harassment is a standard occupational hazard for journalists.

#### **9. On the continuation of EURONEWS Greek Edition (TV & Web) operation**

*Tabled by JUADN (Greece), ESIEMTH (Greece), ESPIT (Greece), PFJU (Greece), PEPU (Greece) and ESK (Cyprus).*

The EFJ Annual Meeting in Zagreb notes with concern EURONEWS management's decision to cease operation of EURONEWS Greek Edition (TV & Web) by December 15, 2021. EURONEWS management's proposal to European Commission for next year does not include funding for the Greek Edition (TV & Web) since according to their assessment it is not sustainable, for its operational cost is entirely covered by the European Commission funding and makes no profit.

If the EURONEWS management's decision goes ahead, Greek Edition (TV & Web) will stop operating on December 15th thus Europe's oldest language will be silenced, affecting journalists' and media workers labour rights, who in spite of their successful service for almost 10 years and being professionally skillful and efficient, will be led to unemployment amid the unprecedented economic and Covid-19 crisis. Recently journalists were notified that EURONEWS management will start gradual layoffs starting October 27th. Five (5) journalists will be fired with immediate effect on that date, another five (5) at the end of November and the rest at the end of December 2021.

The reason cited by EURONEWS management i.e., Greek language's low pervasiveness completely disregards its cultural value, since it was spoken by the continent's most ancient civilization and Europe derives its very name from the Greek language. Also ignores the significance of the Edition for Greece and Cyprus and the Greek Diaspora all over the world. As Greeks and Cypriots are a vital part of the European public and not a negligible minority, this decision impinges on the Greek language directly affecting multilingualism, a value embraced and promoted by the European Union.

Ceasing EURONEWS operation in an official E.U. language is contrary to harmonious coexistence of 24 official E.U. country members' official languages challenging multilingualism expression of E.U. countries' cultural identities, preserving Democracy, transparency and accountability.

The EFJ Annual Meeting in Zagreb instructs EFJ Steering Committee to intervene with the European Commission and EURONEWS parent company, in order to reconsider their decision and keep EURONEWS Greek Edition (TV & Web) operation thus contributing in consolidating an E.U. single culture.

## **10. On the support for the journalists and media workers of Groupe Moniteur / Infopro Digital in France**

*Tabled by SNJ-CGT (France)*

Groupe Moniteur is a B2B specialized information company for professionals in the construction, architecture, energy and local government sectors. It has about 380 employees, including about 100 journalists, and employs more than 200 freelance journalists each year. It is a subsidiary of Infopro Digital, the largest player in the professional press in France and one of the main players in Europe, with magazines and events in Germany, Belgium, England, Spain, Portugal and Russia.

After a digital social movement organized by specialized freelance journalists, and supported on social networks by the EFJ and several European unions from Spain, Belgium, Germany, Croatia, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden and Denmark, to demand the revaluation of freelance rates, unchanged for ten years, despite significant profits, the company does not respond favorably to the demands of the most precarious journalists and has been hardening its tone against all employees since September.

- On September 14, Groupe Moniteur was condemned by the Chartres industrial tribunal for not respecting the rights of a freelance journalist. The SNJ-CGT was a voluntary intervener and also won on behalf of the profession. The Publisher decided on September 30 to appeal, showing that it has no regard for the Cressard law, which recognizes the presumption of salaried status of freelance journalists in France, and that it does not care to pay, because the sums are derisory compared to its profits.
- On September 15, the company was also condemned by a summary court for not giving the elected members of the economic and social committee access to the strategic, financial and social figures, provided for by law.
- During the current negotiations on a new agreement on copyright, the Publisher made it clear on October 5 that it did not intend to share reprography and digital reproduction rights with journalists, even though it receives around 1 million euros each year for this.
- An expertise on psycho-social risks is also underway, the final report is expected before the end of the month, but the elected representatives of the staff of the economic and social council have already reported to the management the suffering of the employees because of the managerial pressures. A telework agreement for the

entire Infopro Digital group has been signed this summer, but many employees have already expressed difficulties with its application, particularly with regard to the balance between personal and professional life.

The Groupe Moniteur company makes profits of more than 25 million euros on average, it has accumulated more than 180 million euros since 2014, it has also benefited from more than 2 million euros in social contribution reductions, as well as support aid because of the Covid-19 crisis.

The European Federation of Journalists, meeting in a general assembly in Zagreb on October 9 and 10, gives its full support to the journalists and all employees of Groupe Moniteur.

We demand that the Publisher respects the laws, and in particular that it recognizes the status of employees of journalists paid on a freelance basis, as it is provided for in French law. All workers have the right to collective bargaining.

We ask the Publisher to pay the authors' rights, without encroaching on a fair and equitable sharing of the reprography and digital reproduction rights.

We call on the French government, and in particular the Ministry of Labor, to take the necessary measures to enforce the law. It is not acceptable that each employee is forced to go to court to enforce his rights.

We remind the main shareholder, the Towerbrook investment fund, that they must enforce their own responsible ownership statement which states, among other things, that they « support their portfolio companies to develop best practices in respect of working conditions, including the health, safety and wellbeing of their employees, their compensation structures and remuneration practices ».

We offer our solidarity and support to the journalists and workers of this company, as their struggle to defend their rights concerns all employees and all journalists, in France and in Europe.

## **11. On the need to support public broadcasting in Madrid**

*Tabled by FSC-CCOO (Spain)*

The annual meeting of the European Federation of Journalists held in Zagreb on 8 and 9 October 2021 demands the government of the Community of Madrid, presided by Isabel Díaz Ayuso, to comply with what is regulated in Article 20 of the Spanish Constitution on the protection of the rights of citizens to communicate or receive truthful information by the media, the State being the guarantor of the public media.

The public broadcaster of the Community of Madrid, Telemadrid, must be an independent media and its Board of Directors must guarantee its work as a public service so that Madrid society has truthful and verified information and is not the mouthpiece of the Popular Party.

Furthermore, the labour rights and stability of Madrid's radio and television professionals must be guaranteed by providing it with a sufficient budget.

A free and democratic society will be a free and democratic society because of free and democratic public media. Information is a fundamental right that all political parties must defend and protect in order to achieve a more democratic and pluralistic society.

## **12. On the defence of unwaivable copyright and collective management**

*Tabled by FSC-CCOO (Spain)*

The annual meeting of the European Federation of Journalists held in Zagreb on 8 and 9 October 2021 demands to the Spanish Government that the transposition into Spanish law of the Copyright Directive respects all the fundamentals and rights contained in it so that, at last, the copyright of journalists in this country is recognised.

It cannot continue to maintain the situation that is occurring in the Spanish media in which journalists, in order to be able to carry out their work in a dignified manner, often have to sign contracts with abusive clauses on the transfer of their copyrights.

For this reason, the EFJ's annual assembly calls on the Spanish government, and especially its minister of culture, to recognise that journalists have the right to copyright, that it is an inalienable right, and to support compulsory collective management to prevent the precariousness that many professionals suffer from forcing them to renounce this right for fear of not having a stable job.

## **13. On Iberian Public Broadcasters**

*Tabled by FAPE-FeSP-UGT (Spain) and SJ (Portugal)*

The EFJ Annual Meeting express its refusal to the last abrupt step taken at the end of September by Isabel Díaz Ayuso, president of the Madrid autonomous region (CAM, in Spanish acronym) to confirm José Antonio Sánchez as the new Director General of Radio Televisión Madrid (public regional broadcaster, RTM) even before the legal end of his predecessors mandate.

Sánchez has behind him a long route as a harmful administrator in the RTM broadcaster, also in the all-Spain national broadcaster RTVE. In 2012, he signed a plan which leads to 861 lay-offs in RTM.

As the main executive person in his previous periods in RTM and RTVE, Sánchez took as well all kind of cynical decisions to favour politically the Popular Party (PP, conservative) what triggered strong criticism from all sides of the political spectrum, except from the PP and Vox (extreme right party).

To be reminded that Vox supports Ayuso's proposal conditioning it to a cut of 10 percent of the RTM budget.

This alarming news about Telemadrid happened simultaneously to the next:

-The main political parties have recently monopolised all Administrative Council seats of the all-Spain RTVE, by imposing personalities closely attached to right and/or left political parties. By that imposition politicians have ignored the results of the legal public contest to choose the most relevant ones between civil society experts.

-In Catalonia, the leaders of political parties continue obstructing the law by blocking the public contest which is also legally compulsory to renew the Council of the CCMA (catalán public broadcasters corporation).

- In Galicia, the parliamentary conservative majority in that autonomous region is disregarding its own 239/2011 law on how to choose the public broadcaster CRTVG Director General by 2/3 votes of the chamber. No News Journalists Council has been still approved by the Director General. Journalists in CRTVG have launched a series of protests against a variety of attacks to its editorial independence.

-A certain number of jobs in the public media can be put at risk through a sudden draft law about acting working positions. In RTVE around 300 jobs are in danger.

-Following the same logic, the public RTP (Portugal) is going everyday through a remarkable loss of staff jobs of journalists which are never replaced. The diminishing funding of the RTP (public radio and television) has led as well to stagnation of salaries, worsening working conditions and increased precariousness.

The EFJ Annual Meeting supports the struggle of the journalists and other unions inside Telemadrid.

The EFJ AM supports its affiliates in Spain and Portugal in their defense of PSB and against partisan interference of any kind. Political neutrality of the audiovisual public services must be respected.

This EFJ AM asks for correct funding of public service broadcasters in Spain and Portugal and demands stable labour contracts and decent salaries for journalists and other staff.

This EFJ EM instructs the EFJ steering committee to monitor the frequently unexpected government decisions which put at risk the audiovisual public services in Spain and Portugal.

## Statements

### **1. On equitable coverage by media, namely public**

*Tabled by SJ (Portugal), FAPE and FESP (Spain)*

Noting that the latest Global Media Monitoring Project report shows that only 25 percent of the world's news reports have women as subjects or sources of information,

Noting that the study "Who makes the news?", carried by the non-governmental organization World Association for Christian Communication every five years, is the largest portrait on the representation of women in world media coverage,

Noting that the report for 2020 (released in July 2021) was based on data from 116 countries, and a set of 30,172 stories disseminated on the same day in newspapers, radio, television, websites and on the social network Twitter,

Emphasizing that the study concludes that it will take "at least 67 years" to achieve equal representation of men and women in media,

Considering, as an example, that only 27 percent of experts heard in the news about the covid-19 pandemic were women when, in practice, they represent 46 percent of the healthcare workforce,

Recognizing that European media have registered "the most significant progress" since 1995, when the study started being done (although recalling that Europe only rises to 28 percent),

Recognizing the efforts, though not sufficient, of media organizations to diversify their expert banks,

Recalling that 57% of reporters are women and 4 out of 10 stories are now told by women journalists, who are more likely to pay attention to issues that interest women and to seek them out as sources of information,

Recalling that, at the same time, a glass ceiling persists, and women journalists are not "in charge" as much as men journalists (resulting in less power to choose topics and sources of news stories),

The European Federation of Journalists, on its Annual Meeting in Zagreb, on 8 and 9 October 2021,

States that the invisibility of women remains shocking in media with a global dimension, especially those serving large audiences,

States that, although all media are accountable and share social responsibility on this issue, it is outrageous that that invisibility persists in public funded media, such is the case of Portugal,

States that this status quo contributes for the erosion of trust in journalism and that a diverse and plural portrait is crucial to end gender stereotypes and promote social transformation,

Urges all media to give more citizens an opportunity to tell their stories and to represent the diversity of people and opinions,

Urges media to comply with the public recognition of the contribution of women to society in general, by covering stories that clearly contest gender stereotypes and abstaining from normalizing the injustices they report,

Urges media to balance the presence of men and women in the news as protagonists and sources of information and diversify news production, dedicating more attention to gender issues and women's rights in daily practice and not just in special dates.

In particular, the EFJ urges the Portuguese public radio, television and news agency to implement effective measures to put an end to discrimination against women in media, namely ensuring equitable coverage of women's presence in areas such as politics, economics and sports.

The EFJ calls for compliance with gender equality in newsrooms and media boards, recommending a factual and scientific diagnosis of the working status and conditions of men and women journalists,

The EFJ also recommends training in newsrooms, for journalists and news directors, to help eliminate gender stereotypes from news production,

Finally, the Annual Meeting calls the EFJ Steering Committee to strengthen lobbying activities to ensure gender equality in media, namely public funded media.

## **2. On homophobic attacks on a Swiss journalist in September 2021**

*Tabled by Syndicom (Switzerland)*

For having written an article on the training courses given by a French far-right ideologue who has been convicted on several occasions for incitement to hatred, apology for war crimes and negationism, a journalist from the Tribune de Genève has been the victim of violent and homophobic verbal attacks. In a video on YouTube and on the blog of the Frenchman who has lived in Lausanne for two years, hateful, personal and unacceptable comments were posted against our colleague.

The growing attacks on the media are an unfortunately known phenomenon and social networks have exacerbated the violence and the feeling of impunity of their authors. But it is

particularly intolerable that a journalist should be the target of personal attacks for simply doing her job and that calls for homophobic hate should be published with impunity.

Since 1 July 2020, following a popular vote, Article 261bis of the Swiss Penal Code punishes homophobic discrimination and incitement to hatred. Our colleague and the homosexual rights association Pink Cross have filed a complaint against the French ideologue. Syndicom supports her fully. It is now up to the courts to remind us that homophobia is not an opinion but a crime.

In general, media publishers must act with supervision and support protocols to protect journalists who are attacked in an increasingly violent way on social networks and the Internet.

According to a UNESCO global survey published last year, 73% of women journalists report having experienced online violence in the course of their work and 25% have been threatened with physical violence.

Syndicom called on EFJ unions to support the Tribune de Genève journalist and all journalists who have been harassed and assaulted in the course of their work. Threatening, intimidating or harassing a journalist is a blow to the freedom and duty to inform. The defence of press freedom requires the protection of media professionals.

### **3. On Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán** *Tabled by SNJ-CGT (France) and DJV (Germany)*

On September 29, 2021, several journalists working for the German media Die Zeit and ARD, for the French daily Le Monde, as well as Czech journalists from Seznam Zprávy and Investigace.cz, were denied access to a press conference organized by Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš and his Hungarian counterpart Viktor Orbán.

It is intolerable that journalists in Europe are prevented from working by governments. This is contrary to the principles of the European Union and all international commitments.

The EFJ General Assembly, meeting in Zagreb on 8-9 October, strongly condemns these exclusions, unworthy of a member state of the European Union, and adopts this motion of censure against these leaders.

### **4. For a responsible journalism in the face of the danger of the extreme right**

*Tabled by SNJ-CGT, SNJ and CFDT-Journalistes (France)*

The rapid rise of extreme right-wing ideologies in France, via certain media that relay a brown wave, requires an urgent mobilisation of democratic forces, trade unions and associations for the defence of freedoms.



It is not tolerable that extreme right-wing ideas are trivialised, by favouring in the media the themes of "all against all", nor that the subjects of insecurity are privileged, without hindsight or contradictory debate. Nor is every news item exploited and the spokespersons of hatred and conspiracy theories are favoured in order to generate buzz and ratings.

Press magnate Vincent Bolloré, through his company Vivendi, has taken over the private national radio station Europe 1 and has caused many journalists and workers to leave the station.

In an article published on 17 June by Le Monde, the Europe 1 trade union (SNJ, CGT, CFTC, FO) and the Société des rédacteurs wrote:

"Day after day, the station seems to be becoming a little more closely tied to CNews [owned by Vivendi], in line with Vincent Bolloré's dream for years. Having become the largest shareholder in the Lagardère Group [through Vivendi], he now has a free hand to carry out his project... without even having to buy the radio station. The sidelining of 'in-house' voices and their probable replacement by newcomers 'seen on CNews', as well as the method of sacking those who express their disagreement too loudly, show us that this project is underway. [By tying its fate to a channel that is known all day long for its political activism, which is strongly anchored on the right, and sometimes even on the extreme right, Europe 1 is going to lose what is most precious to it: its credibility among listeners.

This violence is reminiscent of the 31-day strike at I-Télé in 2016. Vincent Bolloré did not give in, and a hundred disgusted journalists left the television channel, which then became CNews, with the change in editorial line that we know.

You only have to watch and listen to these channels, CNews and Europe 1, to see that their editorial will is to push the far right, by overexposing the polemicist Eric Zemmour, who has been condemned many times for his racist and xenophobic comments.

After Canal+ and Europe 1, Vincent Bolloré also acquired the leading magazine group, Prisma Media (Géo, Capital, Gala, Voici, etc.) on 1 June, causing great concern among journalists, who are calling for the adoption of a code of ethics to protect their independence. Here again, the next few weeks will be decisive.

Vincent Bolloré's interventionism in the editorial line and content of the media he controls is not new. In the newspaper Direct-Matin he had articles published that promoted African leaders with whom the group does business, particularly in port and rail activities, and he had others, more critical, censored at Canal +.

If Vincent Bolloré's behaviour looks like a caricature, it is the concentration of the press and media in the hands of a few billionaires that poses a problem: Xavier Niel, Patrick Drahi, Bernard Arnault, the Bouygues family... Especially since the latter are at the head of industrial groups and make part of their turnover from contracts awarded by the public authorities. The announced M6/TF1 merger illustrates, once again, the dangers of this unhealthy situation.

The European Federation of Journalists, meeting at its General Assembly on 8 and 9 October in Zagreb, expresses its solidarity with journalists who are defending their independence within the editorial offices now run by Vincent Bolloré, and reaffirms that journalism has a role to play in democracy and cannot become a stepping stone for the far right.

## **5. On the freedom of journalists to report on the treatment of migrants**

*Tabled by CFDT-Journalistes (France), SNJ-CGT (France), SNH (Croatia) add??*

From Calais to Lesbos, reporting on borders is becoming increasingly difficult for journalists. At a time when far-right parties are gaining ground across Europe and misinformation on migration is flooding social networks, journalists have a crucial role to play. But governments are trying to hide information, including preventing access to camps.

In Greece, the authorities hardly give permission to visit the facilities where asylum seekers are staying. When we try to access the camps without permission, we risk arrest. In October 2020, for example, on the island of Samos, a team of German journalists was arrested.

The professionals were imprisoned for seven hours without charge and without access to a lawyer. With the construction of new "closed" centres on the Aegean islands, access to refugees will be even more difficult as they will be parked in barricaded structures far from the city with little possibility to move.

When journalists report on the turning back of migrants in the Aegean Sea by the Greek authorities, they are accused by members of the government of being propaganda for Turkey and of spreading "fake news".

In an open letter to the Greek authorities signed on 16 September 2020, seven press freedom organisations had denounced "significant interference in the work (of journalists) which prevents them from playing their vital role as watchdogs".

For the past two years, journalists have also been the object of growing hatred from some anti-migrant residents. Last year in Lesbos, some reporters' equipment was smashed, while several of them were even beaten up.

In France, since the end of 2020, several journalists have been, are and will be prevented by the police, on "orders from the prefecture", from covering the evacuation operations of the migrant camps in Calais, Coquelles and Grande-Synthe. Following these obstructions, two of them decided to lodge a petition for interim release in order to ask the courts to order the prefectures of Nord and Pas-de-Calais to allow the press to work in peace during these operations.

The administrative court in Lille rejected their appeal on 5 January on the grounds that there was a clear "lack of urgency", arguing that the interventions by the public forces to dismantle the migrant camps were over and that the journalists could not prove that they wanted to cover the next one.

However, this is urgent, because it is important for journalists to be able to work without having to warn the authorities in advance. It is also urgent for justice to protect this capacity as journalists to report and analyse the actions and methods of public authorities.

In Croatia attempts from journalists to get information about the treatment of migrants have been halted or made difficult by police authorities in a way that they refuse to answer about

concrete cases claiming that they can't Because of GDPR. There Are no answers on concrete questions regarding allegations on police brutality on borders. There was even a case where police were complaining to Croatian Radiotelevision about their journalist asking questions which resulted with a start of procedure for that journalist to lose his job. Due to reporting on migrants, journalists are often exposed to hate speech and threats.

We call on all European governments to respect the work of journalists, to guarantee their freedom to report on such a crucial issue as migration by giving them easier access to the necessary camps and information.

## **6. Support on independence of local media**

*Tabled by TUCJ (Croatia), CJA (Croatia), BH Journalists Association (Bosnia and Herzegovina), IJAS (Serbia), SNS (Slovenia), SNJ (France)*

The annual meeting of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), meeting in Zagreb, Croatia, on 8-9 October 2021,

Noting that local journalism has long suffered by political pressure and from the problem of survival in the new media environment, as well as the Covid -19 crisis became even more vulnerable for the local media and protection of workers' rights in media houses, The EFJ considers it necessary to help local outlets that are currently struggling, as well as to ensure their continuation in the future. As local journalism faces many economic challenges (wage cuts, layoffs, or even closure) that have been greatly exacerbated by the pandemic, such assistance is more than needed.

The value of local journalism of trust has never been clearer: independent reporting provides the necessary oversight and coverage to inform the public and hold policy makers accountable.

Most local media in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Slovenia are commercial companies, which seems to be their main problem. The capacities of the local economy are not so large that they could finance media production through advertising. Especially as more and more advertising moves to the internet, and the prices of traditional newspaper, television and radio advertising fall, it becomes increasingly difficult for local media to finance the production of local news and pluralistic and media contents by themselves. At the same time, public funding has not increased enough to cover losses on the commercial revenue side.

As a result, local media are increasingly relying on financial arrangements with local governments. These, often completely non-transparent "advertising" transactions, sacrifice media independence in exchange for postponing bankruptcy. In the past year, journalists in local media in our countries have been censored and lost their jobs, as was the case when four journalists from Istarski glas (Glas Istre) were fired due to public disagreement with the editorial policy of the city authorities.

Trade unions and associations have repeatedly asked the government to change the existing model of financing local media, according to which the local government directly

selects the media to which it will allocate public money and decides on the amount of support. Such a funding model brings local media into a relationship of dependence by the local government holders, whose work needs to be critically reviewed.

Advertisers may not have proven to be the best allies of media integrity, but for better or worse, advertising revenue has supported journalism for the longest part of its history. But, of course, this is less and less the case. Recent reports reveal that revenue from digital ads is growing even during a pandemic. The transition from general advertising from the previous period to targeted communication based on personal data for settlement purposes indicates structural changes that are unlikely to be reversed. Most of the billions are appropriated by just a few companies, sometimes called digital oligopolies, without much zeal to spend on professional journalism.

The worst blows to the structural crisis of the media economy have been suffered by the weakest in the media ecosystem: journalists, especially in the local media. It is as if, in addition to the pressures of politics and crime, they need another open front. Media owners, who at least provided institutional and legal support to journalists in better times, are now turning their backs on “content producers”. This is especially evident in the context of local media and relatively small economies, such as Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia ... where media owners are increasingly seeking various informal or formal agreements with local politics.

At the same time, there are several initiatives for a fairer tax system that would address the problems of public revenues lost due to digitalization. Unfortunately, no one recognizes the need to return part of that to journalism.

The EFJ supports the efforts of its members in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia:

- to find models for returning part of the public revenues collected through new - national or supranational - tax rules to media institutions through public subsidies. These thoughtful measures to support public policies for the common good of journalism must be detached from any influence of state, political and economical power, and
- to request necessary changes in legislation on national level to ensure a transparent system of local media funding and their efforts to devise a model of public support for local media that would make them independent of the local authorities whose work they monitor and review.