



European Broadcasting Union

Union Européenne de Radio-Télévision

*The President*

*Le Président*

Dr. László Sólyom  
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Geneva, 6 November 2009

## **Public funding of MTV**

Dear President,

On behalf of the European Broadcasting Union, we write to express extreme concern following the vote which took place in the Hungarian Parliament on Tuesday 3 November on the budget for 2010.

As you know, MTV's public funding for next year has been set at 20 billion forints. After deduction of transmission costs, this amounts to a massive 30% reduction in their budget. While many EBU Members are facing funding cuts in the wake of the global recession, it is clear that what is envisaged for MTV goes far beyond what could be reasonably justified from a financial point of view. We believe that such a severe cut - if upheld - would fundamentally damage public service broadcasting in Hungary and prevent MTV from carrying out its vital function in the service of Hungarian citizens. We respectfully draw your attention to the fact that both the European Union and the Council of Europe have recognized the role of public service broadcasting in fulfilling the democratic, social and cultural needs of each society. It is impossible for public service broadcasters in Europe to fulfil these needs without adequate funding.

We respectfully remind you here that the participants in the 1994 Prague Ministerial Conference of the Council of Europe undertook "to maintain and, where necessary, establish an appropriate and *secure funding framework which guarantees public service broadcasters the means necessary to accomplish their missions*" [emphasis added]. Since then, a series of legal instruments and policy documents of the Council of Europe have reiterated and reinforced this basic requirement. For example, In 2006 the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the guarantee of the independence of public service broadcasting specifically called on member states "to provide the legal, political, *financial*, technical and other means necessary to ensure genuine editorial independence and institutional autonomy of public service broadcasting organizations, so as to remove any risk of political or economic interference".

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At European Union level, the European Parliament, in its Resolution of 25 September 2008 on concentration and pluralism in the media, called for safeguarding of the balance between public service and private broadcasters and stressed that "the tasks assigned to public sector broadcasting by each Member State require long-term funding and guaranteed independence" and that "public service media need to have sufficient public funding to enable them to compete with commercial media, in terms of offering a high standard of cultural and news content".

In June 2009, the Recommendation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the funding of public service broadcasting called on national parliaments to ensure that their public service broadcasters have a clear mission and "adequate long-term funding possibilities for fulfilling this mission". In October 2009, the Steering Committee on the Media and New Communication Services considered the timing of this Recommendation "particularly apt given the current global financial crisis and recession" and noted that "in member states where there is either mixed funding or the public service broadcasters rely solely on state subsidies, governments may be tempted to see public service broadcasters as fair game for cuts in their subsidies and indeed, in some member states this has already happened." In connection to all of the above, we have noted as well that no reductions at all are envisaged in the levels of government support for Hungarian Radio and Duna TV. In conclusion, we urge your government to reconsider the cuts imposed on MTV which would have severe consequences not only for Hungarian citizens but also for the cause of public service media in Europe.

Public service media and the support of media pluralism have always been at the heart of our common European values and we have always held Hungary in great esteem for its support of these values in the past, which also played a very important role in bringing about the reunification of Europe that began some 20 years ago.

Yours sincerely,



Jean-Paul Philippot  
President



Jean Réveillon  
Director General

cc. Dr. Iván Pető, Chairman, Committee on Culture and the Media of the Hungarian Parliament  
Dr. László Majtényi, Chairman, National Radio and Television Commission  
Dr. László Czeglédi, President, Board of Trustees, Hungarian Television Public Foundation