



OPERATING EUROVISION AND EURORADIO

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REFERENCE

DGO/mw/gm

SUBJECT

ERT

Antonis Samaras
Prime Minister
C/o Mr Dimitris Stamatis,
Minister to the Prime Minister's office
Athens
Greece

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to express profound dismay on behalf of Europe's entire public service media community at reports that ERT – a founding Member of the EBU in 1950 – has been shut down with immediate effect. This is a damning first in the history of European broadcasting.

We have today received reports that emergency powers granted to the Finance Minister and the competent Minister have been used to stop ERT's transmissions, leaving Greek citizens wishing to watch ERT programmes in front of black screens.

As the EBU's President and Director General, we urge you to use your powers to immediately reverse this decision.

The existence of public service media and their independence from Government lie at the heart of democratic societies, and therefore any far-reaching changes to the public media system should only be decided after an open and inclusive democratic debate in Parliament – and not through a simple agreement between two Government Ministers.

The European Treaty signed five years ago upheld the so-called Amsterdam Protocol which recognized public service broadcasting as a distinctive element of the European Union's *acquis communautaire*. And only two years ago the European Parliament confirmed that the "dual system" – of public service media alongside commercial players – is the basis of media pluralism throughout the European Union. This very media environment is now endangered.

The European Broadcasting Union, of which ERT is a valued Member, represents and brings together every public service broadcaster in Europe and beyond - from the BBC to RTVE, from ARD to RAI, from YLE Finland to Russia's RTR. Our entire community is shocked by the developments in Greece.

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While we realise the need to make budgetary savings, national broadcasters are more important than ever at times of national difficulty. This is not to say that ERT need be managed less efficiently than a private company. Naturally, all public funds must be spent with the greatest of care. However in a comparison of household licence fees across Europe (2011) ERT ranks among the bottom third (just behind Serbia). Additionally, in August 2012, a quarter of its licence fee revenue was redistributed to finance other state needs – following on top of another reduction of 6.8 per cent in revenue in 2011.

The EBU is on standby to offer its knowledge of Europe's public service media to provide the advice, assistance and expertise necessary for ERT to be preserved as a true public broadcaster in the European mould.

We are willing to travel to Athens at short notice to explore solutions to this grave situation and appeal to you to immediately intervene and re-establish ERT's broadcasting service without delay.

We await your response and trust your ability for sound judgement.

Yours sincerely,



Jean-Paul Philippot
President



Ingrid Deltenre
Director General

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Cc. Mr President Karolos Papoulias
Mr President of Parliament Vangelis Meimarakis