



UNI MEI and FIA condemn the elimination of the Radio and TV license fee in Romania

UNI MEI (UNI Global Union - media, entertainment and arts) and FIA (International Federation of Actors) strongly condemn the abolition of the Radio and TV license fee in Romania, as foreseen in a law adopted by the Romanian Parliament on 25 October 2016.

The government plans to fund Romania's public Radio and TV broadcasters in the future through the State budget. The law is currently awaiting promulgation by the President of Romania, Klaus Iohannis.

Across Europe, license fees have proven to be the most stable, adaptable and transparent way to fund public service broadcasting. As recently as last week, the *European Broadcasting Union* (EBU) published a report¹ highlighting the continued preponderance of this form of funding by license fee among European Public Service Media and the advantages it offers over other forms of funding, due to the direct link it establishes between broadcasters and the public.

UNI MEI and FIA believe that removing the license fee in Romania will seriously endanger the independence of its public service broadcasting and expose it to political and economic pressure. Direct State funding, as foreseen by the Romanian law, risks leaving public service broadcasting under the direct control of the government and its ruling political party. Furthermore, direct state funding is also unstable and difficult to secure in times of economic crisis. It clearly endangers the sustainability of public service broadcasting.

UNI MEI President Gerry Morrissey said: "The Romanian government is playing games with media democracy. The license reform of public service broadcasting in Romania will serve as a pretext to destroy it". EURO MEI President William Maunier stated: "This is a direct attack on the independence of public service broadcasting in Romania and freedom of expression, an important pillar of democracy. We are witnessing similar attempts in other European countries. The EU finally needs to wake up, commit to its own values and start defending independent public service media".

FIA General Secretary Dominick Luquer noted that "there is a very real danger that this law will increase the political dependency of the public broadcaster and in doing so put the editorial independence of public service media in Romania at risk. Freedom of the Press is a fundamental European value and must be cherished as part of a functioning democratic system".

UNI MEI, FIA and their affiliates, representing hundreds of thousands of performers, creators and technical workers in cultural institutions, entertainment, media and the arts across the EU, strongly support *FAIR-MediaSind*. They strongly condemn the reform of the license system of public service broadcasting in Romania and call upon the President of Romania not to promulgate the law eliminating the license fee.

¹ <https://www.ebu.ch/news/2016/10/licence-fee-still-the-core-of-public-service-media-funding-in-europe>