



European Federation of Journalists

EFJ Contribution to the draft PES European Election Manifesto on a New Social Europe

Across the European Union and beyond journalists and media staff demand legal, professional and social conditions that provide social justice, rewards and opportunities.

Over the past years, due to commercial and political pressures, there has been a steady deterioration in employment rights, a growth of unethical journalism, falling public confidence in media and an unprecedented erosion of attachment to European values of public service in journalism.

In 2008 the European Parliament adopted a report on media concentration and pluralism in the European Union. The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) welcomes this report as an important step for the defence of independent and diverse media in Europe.

However the European Federation of Journalists believes that the European Union, despite a legal basis for the protection of cultural diversity and press freedom, has not done enough to defend independent media, strong protection of authors' rights and public service values.

The EFJ recognises that since a commercially-driven media market cannot guarantee *per se* a pluralistic media landscape, it is absolutely essential for media to be clearly protected from undue pressures, whether political or commercial, in order to provide diverse information, culture and quality content to citizens.

The historical development of European economic and democratic space has created a dynamic and vigorous community representing a kaleidoscope of languages, religion, culture and ethnicity. All forms of creative and independent media, including the exercise of professional journalism are essential guarantors of the social, cultural, educational and democratic values of this European landscape.

Freedom of the press and respect for the rights of all people and open debates are the core values of free and democratic society and must be enshrined in the vision of a developing and expanding Europe.

Below is the contribution of the European Federation of Journalists to the PES discussion papers on ***European democracy and diversity*** and ***A new social Europe***.

We ask for the implementation of an **agenda for change in media**, based on the following core demands.

1. Quality Journalism for Europe

Media professionals affirm their commitment to the traditional mission of journalism in the service of democratic society, independently from the technological platform in which they operate.

The global crisis of intolerance and the so-called “fight against terrorism” has intensified calls for a new code of conduct for journalists. But these have been forcefully rejected. Journalists rightly fear curbs on press freedoms and remain adamant that there must be no new rules, codes or regulations that may encourage political interference in media affairs.

For this reason, media professional organisations drafted a Declaration for Press and Media Freedom in Europe and launched the Ethical Journalism Initiative in 2008 .

Journalists seeking to perform their tasks to the best of their abilities need to tackle an array of difficult but urgent issues. These include the debate on best ways of self-regulation, practical actions to be taken to improve quality media and eliminate prejudice within the industry, including in the recruitment of minorities in the newsroom; and discussion of these complex issues with other civil society groups and policy-makers without compromising editorial independence (see annex).

➤ *The EFJ calls on political parties and national parliaments across Europe to defend and to guarantee:*

- *Access for all to a range of high quality programmes, providing impartial news and information and programmes free from political and commercial pressures*
- *Transparency, citizens’ right to information and access to documents: The EFJ wishes that the revision of the regulation on access to documents allows an improvement of the regulation;*
- *Protection of Sources and the right of journalists to professional secrecy;*
- *Pluralism and Quality and voices for all sections of the community;*
- *Support of editorial independence in all media*
- *Financially transparent and accountable ownership and management;*
- *Strong protection of authors’ rights for journalists and creators in the media sector, including and in particular in the digital environment and equitable remuneration when their work is being reused*
- *Funding of public broadcasting –independently from the technological platform- which guarantees freedom from commercial and political control and involves license fees or other independent public funding not subject to political manipulation.*
- *Fairness at work, social justice and rights protection for journalists and all who work in the industry.*

2. Union Rights and Collective Agreements for All

Governments and employers must reaffirm the right of journalists to organise freely, to negotiate collective agreements, to meet with colleagues from the same company, even when they work in different countries.

Collective agreements are replaced by individual contracts, and an increasing number of the profession is forced into atypical employment relations (freelance, self-employed, temporary or agency work). Women and young journalists are particularly threatened by the increasing precariousness of the profession.

In such conditions, media quality is a real challenge. Low morale, low pay and unsecure employment relations mean that there is less time and money for investigative journalism, there is a decline in ethical conduct, less critical reporting and the development of international news agenda, disconnected from local realities.

- *The European Federation of Journalists asks for strong employment rights, the enhancement of authors' rights for all (including economic and moral rights) and, in particular, fights against the exploitation of freelance workers.*
- *The EFJ appreciates and supports the report from the European Parliament on the Green Paper on labour law, and in particular its demand for equal treatment of all workers, independently of their contractual status.*

3. Economic Strategies that Respect Culture and Diversity

Europe must eschew new laws and economic regulations which could harm the profession of journalism or damage the richness of cultural diversity and national identity in Europe.

Plans to revise working time rules and regulation of broadcasting must not create new grounds for further exploitation of media staff or create new opportunities to undermine the European model of public broadcasting.

The EFJ insists that the principle adopted by the Council of Europe and the European Union, that information products have a social, cultural and democratic value as well as economic standing must underpin all policy-making.

- *Further action is needed to restrain the concentration of media at national and regional level, to reduce the assault of commercialism on the news agenda and to protect the information rights of all Europeans.*

The European Federation of Journalists is the confederation of European journalists' unions and associations. It represents over 250,000 journalists in over 35 countries.

<http://europe.ifj.org>

ANNEX.

Ethical Journalism Initiative

Core Values and Principles

The Ethical Journalism Initiative acknowledges that freedom of the media, free flow of information and ideas and open discussion, without the interference of public authorities, is fundamental to the development of free, stable and democratic societies.

Media freedom is a prerequisite for the establishment of mutual understanding and good relations among states and their peoples.

The Ethical Journalism Initiative reaffirms adherence to the principles of freedom of expression, freedom of media and free flow of information as laid down in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as covered by the OSCE principles and commitments, and as set out in other international conventions and agreements including those of UNESCO and the Council of Europe;

The Ethical Journalism Initiative, recognises the vital contribution of free media to building mutual respect, cooperation and stability in the context of different values and cultures, under internationally recognised standards of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law;

The Ethical Journalism initiative supports a more active and better informed public debate in order to achieve the objectives of tolerance, stability and mutual understanding.

Truth, Independence and Seek to do No Harm

Core ethical standards for journalists embrace respect for the truth, the need to be independent and impartial and the objective of seeking to do no harm.

The EJI aims to help media professionals in their efforts to define, agree and implement appropriate ethical standards. Such standards require

- that media should avoid ethnic, racial or religious hatred, xenophobia, or language which incites violence;
- that journalists should strive for balance and fairness ;
- that should be plurality in the media combining high quality, accurate reporting and a range of opinion;

- that media should be prepared to correct inaccuracies and make prompt correction where necessary;
- That journalist should in their work respect human dignity and the rights of others.

Above all ethical journalism requires respect for the truth and the right of the public to truth through the honest collection and publication of information whatever the mode of dissemination. Ethical conduct is also essential in the expression of fair comment and criticism.

Journalists should report only in accordance with facts of which they know the origin and never suppress essential information or falsify documents and they should use fair methods to obtain news, photographs and documents.

At the same time, ethical journalism recognises the importance of democratic accountability. Ethical journalists shall do the utmost to rectify any published information which is found to be harmfully inaccurate.

Professional secrecy, which is a cardinal principle of ethical journalism, requires that journalists protect the anonymity regarding the source of information obtained in confidence.

Journalists need above all to recognise the danger of discrimination being furthered by media, and do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins.

Within journalism it has been long accepted that plagiarism, malicious misrepresentation, calumny, slander, libel, unfounded accusations, and corrupt practices, such as the acceptance of a bribe in any form in consideration of either publication or suppression, are grave professional offences.

Journalists who aspire to the highest standards must, of course, be independent. That means that there should avoid attachment to partisan political, commercial or other interests that interfere with or have the perception of interference in their work.
