

2 September 2024, Brussels

To

Romanian President, Mr Klaus Werner Iohannis

Romanian Prime Minister, Mr Ion-Marcel Ciolacu

Minister of Culture, Mrs. Raluca Turcan

Senate President, Mr Nicolae-Ionel Ciuca

Chamber of Deputies President, Mr. Alfred-Robert Simonis

Senate, Culture and Mass-Media Committee, President, Mr. Mircea-Vlad Pufu

Chamber of Deputies, Culture and Mass-Media Committee, President, Mr. Iulian Bulai

**Subject: Alarming situation in public service media must be urgently addressed**

The European and the International Federations of Journalists (EFJ-IFJ) together with their Romanian affiliate, FAIR MediaSind, express serious concerns over the alarming situation of workers in cultural and media institutions in Romania, especially in public service media. The longstanding crisis in public media, coupled with deplorable conditions for both public sector and freelance media workers, has reached a breaking point.

The representatives of the Federation of Culture and Media FAIR-MediaSind together with the two affiliated unions – the National Union of Culture FAIR and the Romanian Union of Journalists MediaSind - have been arguing for several months over the Collective Labour Agreement of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company. The Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company's decision to replace the Collective Labour Agreement with an Internal Regulation adopted by the employer fails to meet the national and European standards for social dialogue and workers' rights.

The workforce of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company (SRR) is faced with salaries barely above the minimum wage amid a major increase in inflation. The refusal to amend the legislation governing the largest state news agency AGERPRES has also compelled its personnel to subsist on insufficient remuneration, which also raises concerns about the sustainability of the media. At the Romanian Television Society (SRTV), rights enshrined in the institution's Collective Labour Agreement, negotiated by SRJ MediaSind, are not being fully upheld, leaving employees with no alternative but to pursue redress through the courts.

The lack of legal protection for freelancers remains another major issue that must be addressed with the seriousness it deserves. Authorities must urgently provide them with decent working conditions, including minimum rates. Freelancers should also be entitled to negotiate their salaries, as suggested by the European Commission's guidelines for self-employed workers, including freelancers, [published](#) in 2022. Additionally, the Cultural Worker law that does not allow freelancers to be represented by unions when negotiating with employers or state bodies must be urgently amended to uphold their fundamental rights, in line with European legal standards.

Furthermore, in light of the recent government decree proposal to shut down the Bucharest National Opera without prior consultation with relevant stakeholders, our concerns regarding the willingness of the authorities to merge public cultural institutions have been rekindled.

The fact-finding mission [organised](#) by the Media Freedom Rapid Response in Bucharest last June, which included the EFJ, witnessed chronic underfunding and a lack of political and budgetary independence of the public media institutions. The media regulator also lacks sufficient resources and political independence to act effectively in maintaining broadcasting standards and ensuring media pluralism and editorial independence. Taking a radical decision for the cultural sector, the potential merger of public institutions would be dramatic for the media landscape. Such an act would constitute a breach of the European standards on media pluralism and transparency brought by the recently adopted European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), and its Article 5 “on safeguards for the independent functioning of public service media providers” which rules will fully apply in August 2025.

We also call for public support at arms’ length to the media industry, apart from the media controlled by political groups. Journalism is a public good.

We support our colleagues’ request to demand the Ministry of Culture to reconsider the decision to shut down the Bucharest National Opera.

We urge the authorities to engage in open consultation and discussion with civil society and journalist’s unions, which have been unfairly excluded from recent dialogues, and ensure the fundamental rights of the media workers as well as the sustainability of the media sectors, cornerstone of a democratic society.

The EFJ-IFJ will support the strike protest actions that will be organised by our affiliate in Romania – the FAIR-MediaSind Federation against the anti-cultural and anti-European policies applied by the current government against the fundamental rights of workers in media and cultural institutions in Romania.

Thank you for your attention. We remain at your entire disposal for any further information or assistance.

Renate Schroeder, Director of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)

Anthony Bellanger, General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)