

# European Executive Committee Meeting

Madrid, 17 October 2019

## Statement

digital | fair | bargain

### Freedom of expression for VRT !

The EURO-MEI Executive Committee meeting in Madrid, 17 October 2019 expresses its solidarity with workers and their unions at the Flemish public broadcaster VRT.

We are concerned with the plans put forward by the new government of the Flemish region in Belgium that are targeting the autonomy of the public service broadcasting and are calling into question the impartiality the public service broadcaster VRT and its programs.

Following years of restructuring and enormous cuts in the funding of VRT, the announcement of the new government of cutting the VRT funding by over 40 million euros implies a new restructuring process and possible job loss for one in eight staff members! This new policy is not a measure of budgetary discipline or good governance but clearly an attack on the financial and editorial independence of the VRT.

The community of media and entertainment unions condemns the new government's policy, imposing on the VRT and, by extension, on the cultural sector, to '*strengthen the Flemish identity*' in its programming. We protest this move intending to turn the media and culture policy into a tool of political campaigning.

Putting chains on public broadcaster VRT directly weakens our democracy, in the heart of Europe!

We call on the government to halt and review its policy. We join our colleagues and affiliates in their campaign against this far-reaching political interference and instrumentalization.

Together, we demand that Belgian political parties and their leaders take responsibility and provide the VRT with the necessary financial means and ensure its editorial independence and right of freedom of expression it requires to continue to make independent quality public service broadcasting for all citizens.