Press release | 12.06.2013

Greek broadcaster shutdown

Heavy-handed decision underlines democratic concerns

Reacting on the closure by the Greek government of the state broadcaster (ERT), Greens/EFA co-presidents Dany Cohn-Bendit and Rebecca Harms expressed their concern. The move comes ahead of a planned visit by the Green co-presidents to Greece and they announced their intention to visit ERT's facilities and meet with affected staff members as part of the visit (1). Commenting on the situation, Greens/EFA co-president **Dany Cohn-Bendit** said:

"The disturbing and heavy-handed closure of Greece's public broadcaster (ERT) raises major democratic concerns. Public broadcasting plays a fundamental part of a healthy media system and is essential to media freedom, which is a core European value. While reforms are needed, it is abundantly clear that the fiscal consolidation programme is seriously flawed, and this latest move has reinforced this. The European Commission and Troika must urgently redesign the programme, in dialogue with the Greek government, social partners, civil society, regional government and Greek parliament. Greece needs a fair and balanced plan to exit the crisis."

Greens/EFA co-president **Rebecca Harms** added:

"The Greek government's decision to send police to shut down Greece's public broadcaster raises fresh fears about the irresponsible crisis response. If there was a serious intention to reform the broadcaster, the government could have committed to a joint project with employees, civil society and institutions, through a democratic process. In this way, ERT could be reformed and play an important rule in Greece's media landscape, providing objective analysis of the crisis, among other things."

Greek Green MEP **Nikos Chrysogelos** added:

"The government's enforced blackout of the public broadcaster ERT brings back memories from a darker period in Greek history. It should be inconceivable that a democratic state could shut down a public broadcaster, depriving 2,600 employees of work, with no prior dialogue. The result will deprive Greek citizens around the world of important media services.

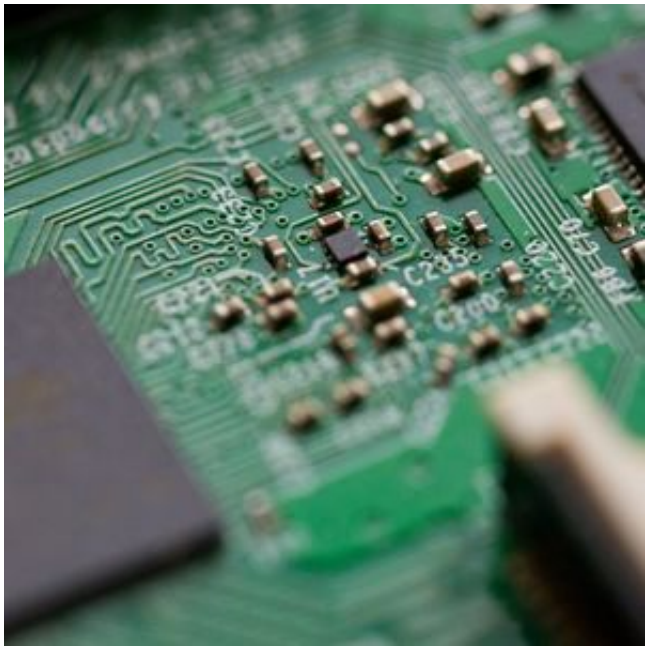
"We urge the European Commission and the government to reverse this decision. ERT should be allowed to play the important role of a public broadcaster in a healthy media landscape. This implies providing balanced and informed coverage of political, social and environmental issues. It should aim to encourage creativity in society, promote an alternative form of political dialogue, and contribute to the strengthening of democracy."

(1) Rebecca Harms and Dany Cohn-Bendit will take part in a press conference at 11.00 on Monday (17 June) at the European Parliament Office, 8 Amalias Avenue Athens.

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Rebecca Harms

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