

Press Release**Prague, June 13, 2013****Statement of Czech Radio on the Decision of Greek Government to Shut Down Public Service Broadcaster ERT**

Czech Radio expresses concerns over the decision taken by the Greek government to shut down public service radio and television broadcaster ERT. The action taken by Greek government is motivated by efforts to decrease the public debt of Greece to foreign creditors. This should not, however, endanger the main human rights to freedom of speech and free access to information for everyone for which the public service media are the cornerstone. Czech Radio considers the decision of Greek government to be an act that may threaten freedom of speech and free access to information and also the independence of public service media that are one of the fundamental pillars of democracy.

The Greek government decided to shut down the broadcasting of ERT at night of June 11 to June 12. The spokesman of Greek government Simons Kedikoglou said that according to the government *“ERT is a typical example of utter lack of transparency and waste of money. For that reason it has to be shut down”*.

Greek broadcaster ERT was financed from the state budget, the financial resources were not secured from the radio and television licence fees. Budget cuts came into effect for the first time already three years ago and since then ERT has been forced to reduce the number of staff by 2500 and cut the budget by 15%. Yesterday the ERT broadcasting has been shut down by the immediate decision of the government.

Czech Radio considers this action a threat to the principles of democratic society, especially the right to free access to information and freedom of speech that should be free of any influence from the state authorities.

European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which is the largest association of public service media and Czech Radio is one of the EBU active members, has already urged the Greek government to

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reverse the decision and to secure all the necessary resources in order to restore the public service broadcasting as soon as possible. EBU has also stressed that any decision on public service broadcasting in any country must be in the first place discussed in an open, democratic debate in Parliament and it cannot be enforced as a one-sided decision by government. The European Treaty signed in 2007, which upheld the Amsterdam Protocol,, and also the statement of European Parliament both acknowledge public service broadcasters as a fundamental part of democratic societies and fully support the existence of the dual system, ie. the existence of both commercial and public service broadcasting in European countries. Disruption of this system leads to imbalanced coverage of information and threatens the whole media environment. EBU represents all European public service broadcasters including BBC, RAI, ARD, ORF, Czech Radio and Czech Television, Radio and Television of Slovakia, Russian RTR and others. Czech Radio fully shares the negative attitude of EBU and its members towards the decision of Greek government.

Particularly in the times of economic and political crisis or natural disasters the public service media are an irreplaceable source of objective, immediate and reliable information. Only their independence will secure their role in the society and will enable them to fulfil their mission.

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