



Denis Diderot Committee  
<https://denisdiderot.net>  
86 avenue de la République  
75011 Paris  
tel. 33.6.08.74.50.12  
[a.lange@uliege.be](mailto:a.lange@uliege.be)

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Darren Jones MP

Chair of the Business, Energy and  
Industrial Strategy Committee  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

**Project of merger Eutelsat / OneWeb**  
**Eutelsat collaboration with the Russian apparatus of war propaganda**

Dear Mr. Jones,

The Denis Diderot Committee reads with interest the letter you sent to the Secretary of State concerning the announced merger between Eutelsat and OneWeb.

The Committee shares your concerns about Chinese participation in the project, but also about the fact that Eutelsat is collaborating with the Russian war propaganda apparatus. The Committee was created at the end of March on this last question.

Eutelsat S.A.'s collaboration with the Russian war propaganda apparatus is well documented (see in particular our [report published the 5<sup>th</sup> April](#)). It takes the form of satellite transmission services for three Russian customers (Trikolor TV, NTV+ and, marginally, RSCC). In addition to the main State channels (Rossiya 1, Perviy Kanal, NTV, Rossiya 24, RTR-Planeta, RT News, RT DE), Eutelsat's customer platforms also broadcast, among others, the Grosny TV channel entirely devoted to the glory of President Kadyrov and the Belaros channel of the Union between Russia and Belarus.

We are currently preparing, with the collaboration of Reporters sans Frontières, a detailed report for the French ARCOM on the content of the Rossiya 1, Perviy Kanal and NTV channels, using, between others, the monitoring by Francis Scarr (BBC Monitoring). You may have a first idea of the kind of statements heard on Rossiya 1 [here](#). This goes far beyond than disinformation and legitimization of the aggression against Ukraine. It includes negation of Ukraine as a State, negation of Ukrainian culture and language, call for the elimination of two millions of Ukrainians, calls to murder Ukrainian and foreign leaders, calls to the nuclear war against "40 Nazis States" (London being regularly designed as a main target), non-respect of the Geneve Convention on PoWs, xenophobic, antisemitic and homophobic statements,...

Furthermore, the two main platforms Triolor TV (25% controlled by the Russian public bank VTB) and NTV Plus (subsidiary of Gazprom Media Holding) have, since the beginning of March, removed from their offer 8 international news channels (including BBC World News).

On several occasions the management of Eutelsat S.A. invoked the principle of neutrality to justify the maintenance of its collaboration with its Russian customers. The CEO, Mrs Eva Berneke, without any ethical considerations, maintains that it is up to the regulators to make decisions that would lead her to terminate contracts with her clients.

The French and EU authorities have been reluctant so far to deal with the issue. But Mr Bruno Le Maire, French Minister of Economy Finance, Industrial and Digital Sovereignty, has recently informed us that he has passed the file to Mrs Catherine Colonna, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs and to the Director of the regulatory authority ARCOM.

Three regulator interventions are possible:

- the French authority ARCOM could oblige Eutelsat to stop broadcasting channels that do not comply with French legal requirements on the basis of article 43-4 of the law of freedom of communication of 30 September 1986 which gives France jurisdiction on TV channels broadcast by its satellites when non established in an EU country or a country part of the European Convention on Television Transfrontier ;
- the European Union could take sanctions against Eutelsat's customer platforms, on the model of sanctions against Russia Today (see our [proposal](#)) ;
- the intergovernmental organization EUTELSAT IGO could decide to exclude the Russian Federation and stop Eutelsat S.A. collaboration with Russian clients for not respecting its Convention and the European Convention on Transfrontier Television.

The United Kingdom could very well take the initiative of launching the procedure for an Extraordinary Assembly of EUTELSAT IGO of which it is a Member. (The normal Assembly will take place only in May 2023).

It could also be useful for OFCOM to raise the issue with its French partner ARCOM within the EPRA and ask what it intend to do to stop this shameless collaboration.

As for the question of the announced merger between Eutelsat and OneWeb, we understand, from one [article in Le Monde](#), that the French government wishes to exclude the UK from a “droit de regard” on Eutelsat’s clients. In [our comment on the announced merger](#), we have invited the UK Government and Parliament to take care of this issue.

The Denis Diderot Committee was created in March 2022 to contribute to the restoration of the free flow of information, without war propaganda, between Europe and Russia with a view to providing support to Ukrainian, Russian and Belarusians civil societies.

We are at your disposal for further information and we invite you to follow our [website](#).

Thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. André Lange  
Coordinator of the Denis Diderot Committee