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Diversity of opinion and media, exchange between the various linguistic regions, an understanding of our different cultures, and news from and about Switzerland – these are values which we are proud of and which are part of the mandate of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SBC). Should that all come to an end?

As much as 75 percent of the SBC's funding comes from licence fees, but the “No Billag” initiative, which will be put to the vote on 4 March, aims to do away with them. It is not seeking to reduce the fees but instead wants to completely abolish them at constitutional level, stipulating that: “Federal government will not operate its own radio and television stations in times of peace.” That would mean over and out for the broadcasters SRF, RTS, RSI and RTR. It would bring an end to the SBC's radio and television programmes in four national languages and the close partnership between swissinfo and the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad. It would also mean job losses for around 6,000 SBC staff and 900 redundancies at 34 local radio and TV stations which also currently receive a share of the licence fees.

If the annual radio and television fees of 365 francs are abolished, it would rapidly result in the closure of the SBC. This would be a huge loss to society and the media scene in Switzerland. Pay TV is no alternative and would cost us more than the licence fee after tuning in just a few times.

The details can be discussed and there is room for improvement. However, overall the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation provides an excellent national and local public service and, at a time of digital fragmentation, it is a guarantor of high-quality information, communication and entertainment. The OSA Executive Board therefore recommends the rejection of the “No Billag” initiative.

REMO GYSIN, PRESIDENT OF THE OSA

Cover photo: Martina Hingis, Switzerland's most famous female tennis player. Photo by Getty Images