[MD] Audiovisual Council imposes sanctions against the regional public broadcaster GRT

IRIS 2024-6:1/19

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At its meeting on 26 April 2024, the Audiovisual Council of the Republic of Moldova (CA), the national regulatory authority, adopted several decisions. One of them attracted a lot of attention as it heavily penalised the public broadcaster *Găgăuziya Radio Televizionu* (GRT) a regional public broadcaster which comprises a TV station and a radio station.

By an earlier decision, the CA had initiated an inspection of compliance of the content of the GRT's programmes with the provisions of Articles 13 and 17 of the Audiovisual Media Services Code of the Republic of Moldova during the coverage of the tenth anniversary of the regional referendum on the self-determination of Gagauzia's foreign policy, which was then found illegal by the court. Those articles of the code contain certain requirements, including the requirement to ensure a clear distinction between facts and opinions, and to report on a fact or event in a reliable way, while information is to be verified and presented impartially and in good faith; there is also a requirement to refrain from spreading disinformation. For more information on the Audiovisual Code and the methodology for detecting disinformation, please refer to IRIS 2019-3:1/24, IRIS 2022-7:1/3 and IRIS 2023-10:1/28.

Having reviewed the results of the inspection, in its 30-page decision, the CA found violations of Article 17 paragraph 3 of the Code in certain live talk shows. It fined the GRT in the amount of MDL 60 000 (EUR 3 140). The violation consisted of several breaches of the prohibition on "broadcast[ing] audiovisual programmes that constitute speech that incites hatred, disinformation, propaganda of military aggression, extremist content, content of a terrorist nature or that presents a threat to national security". The decision of the CA grouped them under the following current affairs topics: 1. Gagauzia has the right to external self-determination; 2. the destruction of Gagauzia; 3. the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is the largest market for the Republic of Moldova; 4. the loss of the language and identity of the Moldovans; 5. the loss of statehood and traditional values; 6. divisions within the Orthodox Church.

The decision cited the code on the mission of the public service media and noted that it had been violated by the GRT. It said in particular that "when celebrated as an event which has been declared illegal at the national level, social cohesion at

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local, regional, national and international level is not encouraged in any way."

In 2023 the GRT was deprived of its slot in the national multiplex of TV channels.

Cu privire la rezultatele controlului efectuat în temeiul Deciziei Consiliului Audiovizualului nr. 36 din 09 februarie 2024

https://consiliuaudiovizual.md/reports/

Decision of the Audiovisual Council of the Republic of Moldova No. 114 of 26 April 2024 "Regarding the results of the inspection carried out pursuant to the Decision of the Audiovisual Council No. 36 of 9 February 2024", published on 10 May 2024

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