

[FR] Pluralism in the expression of different schools of thought: Arcom serves CNews with a formal notice for clear and persistent imbalance

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In a decision dated 12 June 2026, the French audiovisual regulator (*Autorité de régulation de la communication audiovisuelle et numérique* – Arcom) served a formal notice on the broadcaster of the CNews channel to ensure, in future, that its news programmes comply with the requirement for pluralism of schools of thought and opinion. In March 2025, the channel had displayed a clear and persistent imbalance in favour of a single school of thought.

The decision follows on from the case law of the Council of State (*Conseil d'Etat*), in particular the decisions concerning the *Association Reporters sans frontières* of 13 February 2024 and the *Association Cercle Droit et Liberté* of 4 July 2025, which clarified the procedures for monitoring pluralism in the audiovisual sector. It is also based on Articles 1, 3-1, 13 and 42 of the Act of 30 September 1986, on the Arcom resolution of 17 July 2024 concerning the pluralism of schools of thought and opinion, as well as on the provisions of the agreement concluded with the broadcaster.

In this case, *Reporters sans frontières* had asked Arcom to issue a formal notice to CNews and to initiate disciplinary proceedings on the grounds of a lack of pluralism observed between 1 March and 1 April 2025. After receiving the broadcaster's comments, the regulator reviewed 168 hours of programmes, selected from among the channel's most-watched programmes. The analysis focused on the topics covered, the viewpoints expressed, the opportunities for opposing views to be aired, and the organisation of the debates.

Arcom noted that the most frequently covered topics were politics, crime, the war in Ukraine, Franco-Algerian relations, *La France Insoumise* and security. For each of these topics, it found that, in more than three-quarters of the broadcasts, the panellists had presented largely convergent opinions, while dissenting views had been marginal, isolated or dismissed. It also observed that the same comments had been repeated from one programme to the next, leading to the over-representation of a single interpretation of current affairs.

Apart from the actual content of the debates, Arcom considered that the way the programmes were presented reinforced this imbalance. Facts were often

summarised briefly before giving way to lengthy commentary, regular panellists played a dominant role and presenters frequently steered the debates through editorials or statements of position that then shaped the discussions. According to Arcom, guests expressing dissenting views saw their speaking time limited or their arguments challenged.

The broadcaster, on the other hand, argued that the diversity of contributors and topics covered ensured pluralism and provided several examples of differing viewpoints. Arcom, however, considered these points to be insufficiently substantiated and took the view that they did not call into question the finding of a persistent lack of genuine pluralism on the main news topics.

Finally, Arcom pointed out that the requirement for pluralism did not preclude either the existence of a clear editorial line or the use of discussion programmes. Neither did it mean that every programme, particularly discussion programmes, needed to provide a balanced representation of the various schools of thought and opinion that may exist in public debate on the topics they addressed. However, it did prohibit structural imbalances leading to the over-representation of a single school of thought.

Having noted such a breach for the month of March 2025, Arcom served formal notice on CNews to comply, in future, with the requirements of pluralism arising from the Act of 30 September 1986 and the resolution of 17 July 2024. This formal notice constituted a preliminary measure which, in the event of further breaches, could form the basis for the initiation of disciplinary proceedings.

Décision n° 2026-271 du 12 juin 2026 mettant en demeure la société d'exploitation d'un service d'information

<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000054257304>

Decision no. 2026-271 of 12 June 2026 issuing a formal notice to a company operating an information service

