[FR] Arcom fines CNews EUR 200 000 for inciting hatred and failing to control its broadcasts

IRIS 2026-9:1/8

Amélie Blocman
Légipresse

The French audiovisual regulator (*Autorité de régulation de la communication audiovisuelle et numérique* – Arcom) was asked to intervene in sanction proceedings against the *Société d'exploitation d'un service d'information* (SESI), the publisher of CNews, following footage broadcast during the programme "*100 % Politique*" on 2 June and 1 September 2025.

The first clip concerned violence that occurred following Paris Saint-Germain's victory in the Champions League. Comments broadcast on air, in response in particular to the Interior Minister's description of the perpetrators of the violence as "barbarians", had portrayed the violence as the result of a "civilisational" problem and linked it to immigration, particularly "Arab-Muslim" immigration. Arcom noted that people presumed to be from immigrant backgrounds had thus been presented, without sufficient counter-arguments, as foreign and as a serious and growing danger. The remarks, some of which had been couched in highly inflammatory terms, had been likely to provoke reactions of rejection and hostility towards them and, consequently, to incite hatred and encourage discriminatory behaviour towards them on the grounds of their origin. Arcom considered that subsequent statements by two guests on the programme emphasising the need to avoid equating all immigrants with the perpetrators of the violence – statements which had been made at a later stage without reference to the disputed comments – could not be regarded as directly contradicting those comments.

The second clip concerned statements made by an elected representative from Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, in Belgium, who wore a hijab. The discussions had, in particular, referred to a "great replacement", a "great displacement" of the French people and a "logic of counter-colonisation", with Islam being presented as a "religion of conquest". In Arcom's view, these remarks had portrayed people assumed to belong to the "Arab-Muslim immigrant community" as a threat to the rest of the population and were likely to incite fear and rejection. No counter-arguments or sufficient context had been provided by the presenter or the other people in the studio.

Arcom pointed out that, whilst issues relating to immigration and the integration of immigrants fell within the scope of public debate and, as such, warranted

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

special protection under freedom of expression, this freedom was not absolute. Comments made in this context could certainly be controversial, or even contain an element of exaggeration or provocation, but they must not, without exceeding the permissible limits of freedom of expression, constitute incitement to hatred, violence or discrimination, in particular by helping to stir up feelings of rejection or hostility towards a section of the population or a group of people. These principles were of particular importance when the comments were made by politicians, given their role in public debate.

Arcom ruled that both clips breached Article 15 of the 1986 Act, which requires broadcasters to ensure that programmes do not contain any incitement to hatred or violence based, in particular, on religion or ethnic origin, as well as Articles 2-3-2 and 2-2-1 of the channel's licensing agreements, under which the broadcaster had agreed not to encourage discriminatory behaviour towards such individuals on the grounds of their origin or religion, and to assume responsibility for its programmes by maintaining control over its airwaves at all times. In view of the nature and scale of the breaches identified, as well as previous sanctions imposed for breaches of the same obligations, Arcom imposed a financial penalty of EUR 200 000 on the broadcaster.

Décision du 24 juillet 2026 portant sanction à l'encontre de la Société d'exploitation d'un service d'information (SESI), JO du 30 juillet 2026

https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000054556400

Decision of 24 July 2026 imposing a sanction on the Société d'exploitation d'un service d'information (SESI), Official Journal of 30 July 2026

https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000054556400

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026