[DE] Daytime Talkshows on TV - Voluntary Code

IRIS 1998-9:1/25

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On 30 June 1998, the television companies in the Association of Private Broadcasting and Telecommunication Operators (VPRT) and the Voluntary Self-Monitoring Agency for Television (FSF) together adopted guidelines on talkshows, with a view to ensuring their social acceptability, particularly where young people and children were concerned.

Talkshows are an important part of several TV stations' daytime programmes. They have recently come under fire, partly because of the themes selected, and partly because of the way in which those themes are presented. Another complaint is that they go out at times when children and young people - who cannot deal adequately with the impressions they receive from them - are watching. The channel "Pro7" recently faced fines because of eight programmes in the "Arabella Kiesbauer" talkshow series. The Berlin-Brandenburg Media Authority (MABB) had set out to establish whether these programmes had broken the rules on protection of children, but suspended the proceedings when it became clear that the members of the VPRT would vote the guidelines. Earlier, other channels had already been fined for breaking the rules in talkshows (see IRIS 1998-3:15). Under the code of conduct, the choice of talkshow guests must ensure plurality of opinion. "People who hold extreme views" must not be offered a "platform where they can parade those views without contradiction". Criminal behaviour must not be played down and trivialised. Talkshows dealing with violence, sexuality, minorities or distressing inter-personal problems must be thoroughly prepared and handled with special sensitivity. When inter-personal conflicts are discussed, actual or potential solutions should, whenever possible, be discussed too. Only guests old enough to deal with the subject discussed should be invited. Children or young people may participate only with their parents' or guardians' consent. When they appear, support should be provided beforehand and afterwards, to ensure that neither they nor their development are adversely affected. Talkshow hosts are responsible for ensuring that guests display tolerance, avoid offensive language and treat one another with proper respect. When unusual or provocative views are expressed, these must not go uncriticised or be presented as the norm. Discussions must be properly led.

The VPRT wants to see contracts with outside production companies checked for compliance with the laws on protection of minors, and renegotiated when necessary. When contracts are adjusted, its guidelines must be respected. The

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station official responsible for the protection of young people must be consulted on any talkshow dealing with sexuality, violence or crime.

The FSF is to enforce these guidelines, "with a view to ensuring that talkshows are structured in a way which adequately protects young people". It reports twice yearly to the television stations concerned, and yearly to the public.

VPRT-Aktuell vom 30. Juni 1998, Freiwillige Verhaltensgrundsätze der im VPRT zusammengeschlossenen privaten Fernsehveranstalter zu Talkshows im Tagesprogramm.

http://www.vprt.de/db/positionen/980630-1.html

VPRT-Aktuell of 30 June 1998, Voluntary code of conduct of private television stations within the VPRT for talkshows on daytime television.

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