

[DE] "Big Brother" TV Programme Given Green Light

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*Wolfgang Closs
Institute of European Media Law (EMR), Saarbrücken/Brussels*

Since 1 March 2000, private broadcaster RTL-2 has been showing the television programme "Big Brother". It portrays ten volunteers living in a building cut off from the outside world, constantly monitored by cameras and microphones in the various rooms of the house.

There are daily reports on life in the house. Every two weeks, the inhabitants select two of their colleagues whom they think should be excluded. Television viewers decide through a telephone vote which of the two should leave. Viewers will select the winner of the 100-day contest, who will receive DEM 250,000 in prize money, from the three candidates remaining on 9 June 2000.

The programme has been heavily criticised in the public arena. It has triggered a socio-political debate over whether the constant surveillance of people should be the subject of a television programme.

Supporters of the programme argue that it is only a game in which the candidates have volunteered to take part. Millions of viewers enjoy watching the programme because it portrays real-life situations.

Opponents are demanding that the programme be banned, since it amounts to a human experiment that goes beyond what is reasonable for television viewers to watch. There have been calls for the programme to be boycotted, since it infringes upon human dignity. It has also been argued that the broadcaster RTL-2 has broken its own code of conduct.

The regional media authority responsible for programme monitoring, LPR Hessen, has been asked to take action.

Under §3 and §41 of the Rundfunkstaatsvertrag (the Agreement between Federal States on BroadcastingRfStV), programmes which are pornographic, glorify violence or violate human dignity are prohibited.

The Gemeinsame Stelle Jugendschutz und Programm (the Common Youth Protection and Programming Authority - GSJP) was set up to guarantee the common application of the provisions of the Agreement between Federal States on Broadcasting concerning the protection of minors and programming principles. It contains representatives of all fifteen German regional media authorities. On 14

March 2000, the GSJP decided to recommend that the Hessen media authority should take no action against the "Big Brother" programme for the time being.

A major reason for this decision was a statement by the broadcaster RTL-2, promising that the rules of the show would not be altered and the cameras would not film for one hour each day between 9 am and 9 pm in each of the two bedrooms of the house.

The regional media authorities have said that they will continue to monitor the "Big Brother" programmes very closely, checking that they do not breach the provisions of the Agreement between Federal States on Broadcasting. The one episode they examined did not give any cause for complaint.

<http://www.alm.de/news>

