[RO] Media Authority Complains about Breach of Programming Principles

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At a meeting with electronic media programming chiefs held at the beginning of the year, the Romanian national audiovisual council, the CNA (the supervisory body for electronic media), complained about programme quality and the professional ethics of Romanian television broadcasters.

The complaint firstly concerned light entertainment programmes broadcast on New Year's Eve and, to a certain extent, during preceding weekends. It was suggested to the programme directors that programme content had been tasteless, vulgar and even obscene.

Another reason for the CNA's comments was the appearance on television of a geophysics expert in early January. This expert had created panic among many inhabitants of the capital city, Bucharest, by suggesting, allegedly with scientific proof, that a strong earthquake measuring over 7 on the Richter Scale would hit the earthquake zone of Vrancea (in the Carpathians) on 15 January 2000.

In accordance with Article 35.1 of Audiovisual Act No.48/1992 (see IRIS 1995-1: 11), the CNA monitors the activities of broadcasting licence-holders and notifies any broadcaster who infringes the provisions of this Act (Article 35.2). In this case, the CNA complained firstly that obscenities had been broadcast, which was prohibited under Article 2.4. Moreover, according to Article 1.2, viewers and listeners should be properly informed. If the CNA and an accused broadcaster can find no means of remedying a complaint concerning a breach of the Act, the CNA may, under the provisions of Article 37.1, impose penalties against the licence-holder. These range from a fine of 2-5% of the previous year's budget or the suspension of a licence for between one and three months, to the shortening of the period of a licence's validity to half its original length. According to Article 39, the broadcasting of obscenities may also be punished by a fine or a prison sentence of between three months and two years.

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