[FR] Loft Story, the French Adaptation of Big Brother, under Investigation by the CSA

IRIS 2001-6:1/14

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A version of the well-known programme Big Brother, which appeared originally in the Netherlands, has now been adapted in France; it consists of filming, 24 hours a day, the lives of 11 single people enclosed in a loft flat for seventy days. The adaptation, called Loft Story, is unquestionably successful, but it has regular brushes with the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (the audiovisual regulatory authority - CSA).

Initially, the CSA made a number of ethical recommendations to the M6 channel that broadcasts the programme, in particular calling on its managers to show the "greatest possible vigilance in order to avoid the broadcast getting out of hand and infringing respect for human dignity" and calling on the channel to ensure compliance with legislation on tobacco and alcohol (see IRIS 2001-5: 6).

In a communiqué on 14 May, the CSA called on M6 to change the rules of the programme. Out of "respect for the dignity of the human person", the participants now have the benefit of "daily periods of respite of significant and reasonable duration that are not recorded, filmed or broadcast in any way". The process of eliminating the participants has also been altered; participants no longer vote on which participant they want to leave the loft, voting instead for their favourite participants. The CSA stated that "clauses must address and give greater detail on the content of this recommendation in the agreements currently being negotiated with M6 and TF1, and in the agreements for the other audiovisual communication services" - a way of saying that the reservations made about broadcasts of this kind should become general rules.

The day after making this recommendation, the CSA served formal notice on Vortex - the company that operates the Skyrock radio station - because of what had been said on the air by presenters and listeners in two programmes devoted to the M6 broadcast. The CSA found that some of the opinions expressed "seriously infringed respect for the dignity of the human person" and were likely to be "damaging to the proper physical, mental or moral development of minors". Skyrock asked the CSA to withdraw the notice, complaining of an "inadmissible and unworthy inequality of treatment" when compared with M6, the main party concerned, to which the CSA had merely sent recommendations which, contrary to the formal notice, did not have any official coercive force. The station announced that it would not be changing its editorial attitude.

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Communiqué n° 449 du CSA du 14 mai 2001 et décision du 15 mai 2001 portant mise en demeure à l'encontre de la société Vortex

Communiqué no. 449 by the CSA of 14 May 2001 and decision of 15 May 2001 on serving formal notice on the company Vortex

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