[HU] Regulatory Authority Takes Action Against “Big Brother”

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In a decision of autumn 2002 the Országos Rádió és Televízió Testület (National Radio and Television Commission - ORTT, the independent regulatory authority for the media) stated that TV 2 - a national commercial television channel - violated the provisions of Act No 1 of 1996 on Radio and Television Services (Broadcasting Act) aimed at protecting minors by broadcasting a version of "Big Brother". Beyond this statement the ORTT has also imposed a HUF 6,900,000.- (approx. EUR 290,000.-) fine on the broadcaster.

Neither such kind of reality shows nor relevant ORTT's decisions in this regard have been a new phenomenon for the Hungarian broadcasters. The first program - entitled "the Bar" - had been broadcast by a local television channel (Viasat3) in the Budapest region in spring 2001. It was followed by the episodes of "the Base" on TV 2. Both programs had been the subject of decisions of the ORTT imposing sanctions on broadcasters because of infringements on human dignity.

This autumn both of the national commercial television channels decided to introduce the Big Brother-type reality show in its original format, showing the daily life of the volunteers isolated in a house. The episodes of the shows are broadcast at nearly the same time on the two television channels.

The latest decision of the ORTT on "Big Brother" is based on an analysis of a 10-day period of broadcasting. It states that the episodes of the program - broadcast regularly at 19.00 / 7 p.m. - contained sexually explicit scenes and dialogues. The analysis also shows that more than 200,000 minors had followed the reality show, which was promoted by the broadcaster as a program suitable for everyone. The broadcaster currently has appealed to the court against the ORTT's decision.

Following the decision the regulatory authority also held a public consultation involving the participation of the representatives of the broadcasters and other interested parties on the protection of human dignity and minors concerning Big Brother-type program format.

Az ORTT 1365/2002. számú határozata

ORTT, Decision No 1365/2002 (IX. 19.)

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