[GR] New Code of Conduct for News and Other Political Programmes

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The Presidential Decree 77/2003, published on 28 March 2003, ratified a new code of conduct for news and other political programmes drafted by the National Council for Radio and Television (ESR). This code of conduct was drawn up in accordance with the procedure set out in Article 3(15) of Law 2328/1995. Under this Article, prior to the elaboration of codes of conduct, the National Council for Radio and Television must seek the opinion of the National Federation of the Reporters' Associations, as well as the opinion of the Advertising Agencies and advertisers' representative associations, of the public broadcaster (ERT-S.A.), of the private broadcasters and of the two associations most representative of local radio stations.

The new code of conduct applies to all radio and television broadcasts, both free-to-air and subscription services. It aims at the protection of individuals' rights and respect for public order, pluralism and democracy, within the framework of the Greek constitution (Article 15), which provides that audio-visual media must ensure quality demanded by the social role of radio and television and the cultural development of the country. It should be noted that the Greek constitution explicitly recognises citizens' constitutional right to information (Article 5A).

The new code of conduct regulates specific issues relating to the presentation of news bulletins, reporting on legal proceedings, the protection of the presumption of innocence of the accused, as well as the protection of minors, especially when children or adolescents are involved in criminal acts or accidents. Special concern is demonstrated for the protection of private life and of the rights of individuals who participate in radio and television programmes and talk shows. According to the new rules of conduct for news reports and political programmes, the broadcasting of information acquired through illegal telephone bugging, secret microphones or cameras is forbidden. It is also explicitly stipulated that the broadcasting media are bound to respect and not to transmit aggravating comments regarding the refusal of an individual to participate in a news programme.

News should be presented with due accuracy and impartiality. Events must not be confused with personal views expressed by journalists during a news or political programme. The broadcasting of breaking news must be restricted and take place

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after careful consideration. Special attention is given to the presentation of violence and the reporting of crimes, criminal techniques and terrorist acts. Such reporting must in no way encourage imitation. Also, it is explicitly laid down that reporters' investigations must not be a substitute for police inquiries and interrogations. During the coverage of protests or party political events it is forbidden to use methods that encourage misleading the audience.

The above decree shall enter into force three months after its publication in the Official Journal, that is to say on 28 June 2003.

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Decree No. 77/2003 "Code of conduct for news and other political programmes", Official Journal A, 28 March 2003

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