# [FR] France 2 Warned that they Must Provide Information Honestly

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On 12 February the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (audiovisual regulatory body - CSA) decided to serve formal notice on the national public-service television channel France 2 ordering it to abide by its obligation to inform viewers properly and broadcast honest news, in accordance with Article 43-11 of the amended Act of 30 September 1986 and Article 2 of its terms of reference, appended to Decree no. 94813 of 16 September 1994.

On 3 February, as Alain Juppé, leader of the Union de la Majorité Présidentielle political party, was preparing to reveal live on the 8 o'clock news on the national private channel TF1 his decision to stay in politics pending appeal against a court order that had just resulted in his becoming ineligible, the newscaster on France 2 opened the news programme with the announcement, against the written headline "A. Juppé stands down", that Mr Juppé, who is an MP and mayor of Bordeaux, had "decided to distance himself from political life to devote himself to the legal battle", adding that the withdrawal would be gradual. This false announcement of Mr Juppé's withdrawal from the political scene provoked nothing short of a crisis at the public-service channel. One week after the incident, the editorial team adopted by more than a 65% vote a motion of defiance proposed by the French society of journalists against the news management and the news programme team. The vote resulted in the resignation of the person responsible for news programmes and the suspension of the newscaster for two weeks. On a more fundamental level, the incident raises the question of competition between France 2, in the public sector, and its "rival", TF1, in the private sector. The former Minister for Culture, Catherine Tasca, felt that France 2 should not be allowed to drift into imitation and chase after audience figures, an attitude that forced the channel to make choices that were risky to say the least. Indeed, the opening paragraph in the preamble of the channel's terms of reference recalls that the attention the national programme companies pay to audience figures reflects demands that they should respect the public's desire for more than a purely commercial performance.

Thus after hearing the chairman of the public-sector France Télévision group and the managing director of France 2, the CSA decided in plenary session to serve formal notice on the channel to abide by its statutory and agreed obligations, on pain of incurring the sanctions provided for in Articles 48-2 et seq. of the amended Act of 30 September 1986 (broadcasting of a communiqué or payment

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of a financial penalty). This is the first time the CSA has issued formal notice to an eight o'clock news programme on any channel.

### *Délibération adoptée par le Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel le 12 février 2004 mettant en demeure la société France 2*

*Deliberation adopted by the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA) on 12 February 2004 to serve formal notice on the company France 2*

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