[FR] The End of “Significant Airtime” for M6

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Amélie Blocman
Légipresse

Article 27 of the Act of 30 September 1986 on audiovisual communication provides that a decree (in this case the Decree of 17 January 1990) shall lay down the general principles concerning “the broadcasting, particularly during peak air time, in proportions at least equal to 60% of cinematographic and audiovisual works of European origin and in proportions at least equal to 40% of cinematographic and audiovisual works originally made in the French language”. The French audiovisual regulatory authority (*Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel* - CSA) is allowed to use, instead of “peak air time” (6 to 11 p.m. every day and 2 to 11 p.m. on Wednesdays), the alternative category “significant air time” for channels observing these quotas. Significant air time is “defined each year for each service, more particularly according to the characteristics of its audience and its programming, and the importance and nature of its contribution to production”. This provision was originally intended to make it easier to comply with quotas, particularly for the newer channels, since the time windows applied by the CSA can be wider but not narrower than those of common law. Thus, as for local television, the terrestrially broadcast channel M6 which was launched twenty years ago, has always had the benefit of the CSA’s special “significant air time” scheme because of its audience (young - 15-34 years age bracket) and its programming (mainly music), and this gave the channel a broader window in which to meet the quotas. This airtime has remained unchanged since 1996 at 5 to 11 pm every day and 2 to 11 pm on Wednesdays, i.e. one hour more than the ordinary scheme applicable to the other terrestrially broadcast channels. The decision to maintain the special hours is reviewed by the CSA each year, according to the development of the underlying criteria. Meeting in plenary on 12 June 2007, the CSA decided not to retain M6’s “significant air time” scheme for 2008, on the grounds that the general evolution of the channel and its current situation no longer justified retention. The channel has, in fact, clearly evolved away from its original definition as young with a musical specialisation towards a more generalist format. Thus the advantage given to M6 until the end of the year, and seriously criticised by its competitors, enables it to programme American series in prime time and at the same time more easily meet its quota for French series, which generate much smaller audiences. M6 could also ask the CSA to review its music obligations: up until now channels have had to devote 30% of their broadcasting to music and to produce 150 music videos, during schedule times of their choice.

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Application à M6 des heures de grande écoute pour l'année 2008, communiqué de presse du CSA du 12 juin 2007

http://www.csa.fr/actualite/communiques/communiques_detail.php?id=123475

Application to M6 of the "peak air time" scheme for 2008 - CSA press release of 12 June 2007

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