[LT] Fine Imposed for Violation of the Law on Alcohol Control

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Jurgita Iešmantaitė
Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania

On 25 February, the State Consumer Rights Protection Authority imposed a fine of EUR 580 on the national broadcaster TV3 for the violation of provisions of the Law on Alcohol Control.

The reason for the fine on TV3 was a live broadcast of a basketball match on 9 January 2008 at 7 p.m. The Law on Alcohol Control prohibits alcohol advertisements with the participation of athletes and provides watershed hours for alcohol advertising from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. TV3 was deemed to have violated the mentioned provisions of the Law by showing basketball players wearing T-shirts with logos of the famous and very popular Lithuanian beer " *Švyturys* " during the live broadcast of the game. The same logos were also visible on the ground and in the stands around the basketball ground.

It should be noted for reasons of clarity that the logos of alcohol products were visible on the TV screen only within the scenery of the game, so that the broadcaster could not technically block them.

However, the State Consumer Rights Protection Authority, which is responsible for the control of the requirements on advertising of alcohol in the media, treated the described case as an infringement of the Law. According to the recent amendments of the Law on Alcohol Control (see IRIS 2007-8: 15) that came into force on 1 January 2008 alcohol advertising is prohibited from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. in broadcast programmes of broadcasters under Lithuania's jurisdiction.

In fact, earlier in the year, when the aforementioned law came into effect, many debates were held concerning the broadcasting of logos of alcohol products during sports programmes. The main issue was whether the broadcasting of such logos placed within the sports field during live broadcasts of sports games could be equated with traditional advertising and whether the stricter requirements (compared to those before the amendments) should apply to such advertising.

A solution has not yet been found. The *Seimas* (Parliament) has formed a working group intended to work out the necessary amendments regarding this issue. A proposal should be prepared by 31 March 2008.

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