[PT] Media Regulatory Body Praises Bullfighting

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On 3 September 2008, the *Entidade Reguladora para a Comunicação Social* (Portuguese media regulatory body - ERC), handed down a decision holding bullfighting to be “an integrant part of the Portuguese ethos” and stating that there are no reasons that justify its interdiction from television programming. The deliberation 13/CONT-TV/2008 results from a complaint put forward by Mr. Pedro Henrique Assunção Grilo, who argued that the private channel Televisão Independente (TVI) should not have broadcast a bullfight on 5 June 2008 before 22:30h and without an identifying symbol advising viewers on the violent nature of the programme.

Mr. Pedro Henrique Assunção Grilo based his complaint on a previous court decision. Indeed, on the 30 May 2008, a Lisbon Court prohibited the broadcasting of the programme *44th Corrida TV* (44th TV bullfighting), scheduled by the Public Service Broadcaster, Rádiotelevisão Portuguesa (RTP) for Sunday afternoon 8 June 2008 at 17:00h (see IRIS 2008-7: 18). The Court decided that bullfighting could not be broadcast before 22:30h and without an identifying symbol advising viewers on the violent nature of the programme's content. Since the court had concluded that bullfighting is a “violent” demonstration and “might influence negatively the development of children and young adults' personalities”, Mr. Pedro Henrique Assunção Grilo believed that the same rationale should applied to other TV channels.

This was not however the understanding of the Portuguese media regulatory body. The ERC prepared a long deliberation explaining the historical roots of bullfighting in Portugal, arguing that bullfighting is one of the oldest and most genuine Portuguese cultural demonstrations: “As opposed to football, cycling, racing and other activities which are internationally standardized, bullfighting is a ‘unique demonstration of Portuguese culture’”.

The previous court decision had argued that bullfighting on television might lead children and young adults to accept violence against animals as natural and entertaining. Furthermore, making bullfighting available to children on daytime TV goes against the state's educational objectives. The court said that the protection of animals is a structural value in modern societies and that the Portuguese state's compulsory children’s textbooks defend the protection of animals and, in some cases, include the Universal Declaration of Animal Rights.

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Despite this view, the ERC bases its deliberation on different grounds. It argued that, according to the law decree DL 116/83, bullfighting shows are classified as appropriate for 6-year-olds. The ERC states that if the law considers bullfighting an adequate show for a 6-year-old child in loco, it is not reasonable to argue that it has a negative influence on children if watched on television. Additionally, the ERC contends that bullfighting might even contribute to the transmittal of some relevant values such as the "defence of the cultural patrimony", "courage", "team spirit" and "sacrifice".

Overall, the ERC considered that, given the present-day legal framework, there are no grounds for prohibiting bullfighting on television: "programming freedom should only be limited in exceptional cases."

Conselho Regulador da Entidade Reguladora para a Comunicação Social, Deliberação 13/CONT-TV/2008, Queixa de Pedro Henrique Assunção Grilo contra TVI, Televisão Independente, S.A.

http://www.erc.pt/index.php?op=downloads&enviar=enviar&lang=pt&id=603

ERC's deliberation, 3 September 2008

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