[IE] Religious Advertising

IRIS 2009-4:1/19

Marie McGonagle & Tracy Murphy
Faculty of Law, National University of Ireland, Galway

In December 2008, the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI) rejected a proposed radio advertisement for Veritas. Veritas is a religious publisher and retailer wholly owned by the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference. The advertisement for products available in Veritas shops and on their website was due to be broadcast over the Christmas period on RTÉ, the national public service broadcaster. The BCI found that the advertisement did not comply with the legislation and regulation regarding advertising directed towards a religious end, specifically section 65 of the Broadcasting Act, 2001 and section 9 of the BCI General Advertising Code (see IRIS 2008-5: 13, IRIS 2004-8: 11, IRIS 2004-3: 10, IRIS 2003-2: 11 and IRIS 2001-7: 9). In reaching its decision, the BCI also had regard to a decision of the Broadcasting Complaints Commission in September 2008, upholding a complaint against a Veritas advertisement, broadcast on RTÉ Radio 1. The advertisement was for religious gifts which relate to “what Holy Communion and Confirmation are really about”.

Veritas submitted three versions of the script for the Christmas advertisement but all were rejected by the BCI. The BCI deemed the following lines to offend the legislation: "Christmas: aren't we forgetting something?"; "Why not give a gift that means more?” and "So to give a gift that means more…" It also found that asking people to visit the Veritas website was "unacceptable". The previous year Veritas had to drop the word “crib” from an advertisement after RTÉ raised concerns. RTÉ said that an issue might arise if the BCI considered that promoting the sale of cribs was directed towards a religious end and was therefore in breach of the legislation and code.

New broadcasting legislation, the Broadcasting Bill 2008, is at an advanced stage in the *Oireachtas* (Parliament). In that context, the BCI has made suggestions to the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources regarding possible amendments which could be made to the section of the legislation dealing with advertising directed towards a religious end.

Decision of the Broadcasting Complaints Commission

http://www.bcc.ie/decisions/sep_08_decisions.html

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026