[GB] BBC Publishes New Guidance Prohibiting Commercial Sponsorship

IRIS 2009-10:1/15

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The BBC received complaints about commercial sponsorship of the Sports Personality of the Year awards in December 2007; these were upheld by the BBC Trust, as there had been breaches of editorial and fair trading guidelines (see IRIS 2008-8: 14). The BBC has now issued new guidelines on sponsorship of BBC events.

The most important policy is that the BBC will no longer accept sponsorship by commercial bodies for on-air BBC events. This covers commercial companies and other commercial bodies (including public/private partnerships) which compete directly in a commercial market. Existing contracts for such sponsorship will be honoured if they are compatible with the guidance.

Sponsorship will be permitted by non-commercial sponsors, such as charities, trusts and foundations, local authorities, government bodies and publicly funded educational institutions. Religious bodies, political organisations and pressure and lobby groups will not be regarded as suitable sponsors. Sponsorship must be of the event, and no programme on a BBC publicly funded service may itself by sponsored, nor may the sponsor's name appear in the title. It will be acceptable for the event name and the sponsor to be associated in signage and verbal credits; for example, 'BBC Young Musician of the Year Event supported by the Tabor Foundation'. Sponsorship will be confined to events such as BBC award ceremonies, performances, cultural events and those which encourage young talent, artistic endeavour, community initiatives and personal achievements. The sponsorship must comply with BBC Fair Trading Guidelines and with the policy on alternative means of finance agreed with the Government. There should be a presumption against the conversion of established programme titles into sponsored events and new sponsored events should only be mounted where there is a strong justification as to why the event would not be possible without sponsorship.

Off-air BBC events may be sponsored, but are subject to the BBC's editorial guidelines. Non-BBC events, such as sporting fixtures sponsored by third parties, can be covered on air in accordance with the editorial guidelines.

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"BBC Editorial Guidelines - Guidance on Sponsorship of BBC on-air Events", 15 September 2009

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/news/press_releases/september/sponsorship_policy.shtml

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