[FR] CSA Imposes new Form of Sanction on Channels

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For the first time ever, in a decision of 9 March 2010, the *Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel* (audiovisual regulatory body - CSA) ordered two channels (TF1 and Canal +) to read out a statement on air apologising for their failure to meet the obligation of rigour in information. Under the terms of their agreement with the CSA, the channels subscribe to an obligation of honesty with regard to information. The CSA is responsible for ensuring observance of these undertakings and may, “in all cases of failure to comply with the obligations incumbent on the editors of audiovisual communication services, order the inclusion in their programming of a statement, for which it lays down the terms and conditions of broadcasting”. In the present case, three cases of failure were held against TF1 - the broadcasting of a photograph of a German killer who was not the person referred to in the news item, images of a demonstration by Muslims illustrating the contrary to what was being announced in the commentary, and images of voting on the HADOPI Act in the National Assembly showing a full assembly chamber whereas it was in fact half-empty. Canal + had broadcast in a magazine programme a parody montage taken from the Internet, presenting it as an authentic extract from a German television news programme on the election of the chairman of a French public establishment. The CSA therefore demanded that each statement should be read out within eight days, during the programme in which the channel’s failure had been noted, giving details of the facts held against the channel. The CSA justifies this sanction by “a worrying increase in the number of failures to comply with the obligation of rigour” - 76 cases had been handled in 2009, compared with 35 in 2008, resulting at the end of their investigation in 32 comment or warning letters being sent to the channels, 10 formal notices to comply being issued, and 2 sanction procedures instigated. Despite lively protests on the part of the journalists and the channels’ management, who consider the sanctions to be “surprising, shocking, and disproportionate”, “questioning the ability of a broadcaster to behave as a reasonable medium and to carry out the necessary rectifications itself on the spot” (which Canal + had done in the following broadcast), the statement was read out on air on TF1 the following week, according to the CSA’s demands. Canal + will do so at the end of March, as the disputed magazine programme has been temporarily taken off the air because of the regional elections. Aware of the difficulties facing the channels in verifying information, particularly as a result of the development of the Internet, the CSA has decided to hold a concerted brainstorming session on the subject.

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Conseil propose une concertation sur la vérification de l'information

http://www.csa.fr/actualite/communiques/communiques_detail.php?id=130539

CSA proposes concertation on verifying information

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