[IT] Media Pluralism

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The *Autorità per le garanzie nelle comunicazioni* (the Italian National Communications Authority - AGCOM) has published a number of press releases and official statements stating the conditions that the media need to follow in order to preserve media pluralism. Italy is currently in the throes of elections, as the provincial and municipal elections were held on the 15 and 16 of May, while a Referendum on four matters will also take place on the 12 and 13 of June.

AGCOM recalls that equal treatment (*par condicio*) is mandatory in the run-up to an election. This applies to TV, radio and newspapers in the fifteen days prior to the polling day and until the close of polling. During this period it is forbidden to make public or disseminate the results of opinion polls on the outcome of elections and the political orientations of voters and voting even if the polls were made in a period preceding the ban. The ban came into force at midnight on 29 April.

The ban also covers direct and indirect propaganda broadcasters and extends to the restatement of political opinions expressed in the days before the ban.

AGCOM found that there was still some imbalance in the speaking time afforded to opposing factions (the prevailing criterion that was taken into consideration).

With respect to the time of news broadcasts, even considering editorial freedom in representing the news, the Authority had identified the need for greater balance in the representation of viewpoints, especially those of the political majority and the opposition, and avoiding situations that could benefit certain forces and certain political or electoral competitors.

The Authority reiterated for the benefit of all the news agencies the need for strict compliance with the principles of completeness, accuracy, objectivity, fairness, impartiality and equal treatment of all party lists and competitors, until the end of the campaign.

The Authority also noted that over time there has been an overexposure of the Prime Minister, who was directly involved in the Milan leadership elections during the provincial and municipal elections.

RAI (the state channels) was issued with several warnings.

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In particular, AGCOM's Commission for services and products, reviewed, in light of complaints submitted, the developments on Friday 20 May, in which an interview with the Prime Minister was broadcast during prime time on TG1, TG2, TG5, TG4 and Studio Aperto news channels.

As a consequence, on 21 May the Authority urgently requested an explanation from those broadcasters. Following statements from RAI and Mediaset, the Commission considered that all the interviews containing similar opinions and political views on the issues of the campaign led to a breach of electoral regulations issued by the Parliamentary Committee of Vigilance and AGCOM.

The Commission has therefore decided, by majority, to impose the fullest penalty permitted by law (EUR 258,230) on TG1 and TG4, as repeat offenders, and penalties of EUR 100,000 each on TG2, TG5 and Studio Aperto.

The Authority reminded the broadcasters of their duty of balance and completeness of information until the conclusion of the election campaign.

Comunicato stampa del 3/6/2011, Provvedimenti in materia di par condicio (referendum)

http://www.agcom.it/default.aspx?DocID=6436

Press release of 3 June 2011, decision concerning par condicio (referendum)

Comunicato stampa del 26/5/2011 Provvedimenti in materia di par condicio

http://www.agcom.it/default.aspx?DocID=6428

Press release of the 26 of May 2011, measures related to the par condicio

Comunicato stampa del 23/5/2011 Sanzioni per violazione dei regolamenti elettorali

http://www.agcom.it/default.aspx?DocID=6377

Press release of 23 May 2011, Sanctions for the violation of the election regulation

Comunicato stampa del 13/5/2011 Provvedimenti in materia di par condicio

http://www.agcom.it/default.aspx?DocID=6343

Press release of 13 May 2011 decision on par condicio

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Comunicato stampa del 10/5/2011 provvedimenti in materia di par condicio

http://www.agcom.it/default.aspx?DocID=6252

Press release of 10 May 2011, Decision on par condicio

Comunicato stampa del 29/4/2011 Precisazioni in materia di par condicio

http://www.agcom.it/default.aspx?DocID=6172

Press release of 29 April 2011, Clarification on par condicio

Comunicato stampa del 28/4/2011 pluralismo

http://www.agcom.it/default.aspx?DocID=6158

Press release of 28 April 2011 on pluralism

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