[FR] CSA Sends out formal Notices for Failure to Observe Political Pluralism on the Air

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Amélie Blocman
Légipresse

In accordance with Article 13 of the Act of 30 September 1986, the audiovisual regulatory body (Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel - CSA) notified the President of the Senate and the National Assembly and the leaders of the political groups represented in Parliament at the end of September 2011 of the speaking times for politicians timed during television news, news programmes and other programmes on the major national television channels, news channels and the main news radio stations during the second quarter of 2011. Since July 2009, a new "principle of pluralism", decreed by the CSA, governs the balance of speaking time for politicians on television and radio (see IRIS 2009-8/19). The rule is that the speaking time of the parliamentary opposition may not be less than half the aggregate speaking time of the head of State and the presidential majority. Furthermore, only speeches by the President that, by their content or context, are part of the "national political debate" are taken into account.

On 19 October 2011, the CSA announced that it had sent a formal notice regarding failure to abide by these rules to the three news channels iTélé, LCI and BFM-TV, and to the general radio stations Europe 1 and France Inter as, during the period from 1 July to 30 September 2011, these channels had totally failed to abide by this balance which provides for the opposition having the benefit of speaking time of between 50 and 100% of the speaking time allowed to the majority. According to Christine Kelly, the CSA member with responsibility for pluralism, iTélé had allowed the parliamentary opposition speaking time of 146% longer than that allowed to the majority; the figures for BFM-TV and LCI were 142% and 130% respectively.

It has to be said that national political news in recent months has been dominated by the Socialist primaries (election of the opposition candidate in the upcoming presidential election in May 2012) and reporting on the "DSK affair" (involving Dominique Strauss-Kahn, former Chairman of the IMF and member of the opposition), which had largely contributed to upsetting the balance in the distribution of speaking time for politicians.

The CSA stressed that these formal notices, which are on a par with a "yellow card" for the channels in question, in fact constitute an order to make sure this does not happen again, and are the preliminary stage in a possible sanction procedure.

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Temps d'intervention des personnalités politiques à la télévision et à la radio au premier semestre 2011

http://www.csa.fr/actualite/decisions/decisions_detail.php?id=134129

Speaking time of politicians on television and radio during the first half of 2011

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