[IE] BAI Launches New Code of Fairness, Objectivity and Impartiality in News and Current Affairs

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On 9 April 2013, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) published a new Code of Fairness, Objectivity and Impartiality in News and Current Affairs as part of its statutory remit.

In accordance with the Broadcasting Act 2009 (see IRIS 2009-10/18), broadcasters are required to ensure that all news and current affairs content is reported in an objective and impartial manner without any expression of the broadcaster's own views. The Act also stipulates that broadcasters must ensure that their treatment of current affairs, including matters that are either of public controversy or the subject of current public debate, is fair to all interests concerned and reported in an objective and impartial manner without any expression of the broadcaster's own views. Broadcasters must also ensure that unfair preference is not given to any political party.

The objectives of the BAI's code are:

- To set out clearly the minimum standards and practices that are expected of broadcasters in their treatment and broadcast of news and current affairs content;

- To provide general guidance to broadcasters to assist in their decision-making process, as they pertain to news and current affairs content;

- To promote independent and impartial journalism in the provision of news and current affairs content;

- To inform and generate awareness among citizens with regard to standards they may expect in relation to news and current affairs content;

- To protect the interests of citizens, in their right to access fair, objective and impartial news and current affairs content.

Based on these objectives, the code sets out general principles as well as specific rules to which broadcasters should adhere. The code outlines four main principles to which broadcasters shall comply in their treatment of news and current affairs content. The four principles are: Fairness; Objectivity and Impartiality; Accuracy

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and Responsiveness; Transparency and Accountability.

More specifically, the code requires broadcasters, inter alia, to ensure that news and current affairs reporting does not express personal views and that conflicts of interest on the part of the editorial team are made known to the public. The code sets out requirements on the use of secret recording and “doorstep” interviews. The code also includes a new rule that requires broadcasters to put in place appropriate policies and procedures for handling contributions to news and current affairs programmes via social media.

The BAI will publish guidance notes on the code shortly for both broadcasters and members of the public. The code will come into effect on 1 July 2013.

Code of Fairness, Objectivity and Impartiality in News and Current Affairs

http://www.bai.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/20130408_BAICOFOI_OnlineVer_bf.pdf

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