[IE] Recent Broadcasting Complaints Decisions

IRIS 2013-10:1/30

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On 10 September 2013 the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) released recent broadcasting complaints decisions. A total of seven complaints were considered in the period. At its meeting held in July 2013, the Compliance Committee upheld one complaint (in part) and rejected three. A further three complaints were resolved by the Executive Complaint Forum at meetings held in July and August 2013.

Under section 48 of the Broadcasting Act 2009, viewers and listeners can complain about broadcasting content which they believe is not in keeping with broadcasting codes and rules. All seven of the complaints dealt either in whole, or in part, with fairness, objectivity and impartiality in current affairs. With respect to the complaint that was upheld the Compliance Committee found that a pre-prepared statement, read by the presenter of the Neil Prendeville Radio Show on Cork96FM, was lacking in impartiality and objectivity.

The statement broadcast, which consisted of a monologue by the presenter outlining his personal views on various issues of public controversy and debate, including his views in relation to non-Irish nationals living in Ireland, was not counterbalanced by an adequate alternative perspective. The Committee held that while some alternate views were voiced by listeners that contributed to the programme this was not adequate to counterbalance the presenter’s robust statement. The inadequacy of the alternative view was contrary to the requirements on fairness, objectivity and impartiality in news and current affairs content.

Two of the complaints rejected by the Compliance Committee related to a RTÉ Prime Time programme dealing with issues relating to the provision of Traveller accommodation in Ireland. The broadcast included a pre-recorded element that examined different perspectives on the issue and was followed by a studio discussion with a panel and audience contributors managed and mediated by the programme presenter.

The focus of the complaints related to the composition of the panel, the negative language and content of the programme, which - it was claimed - portrayed Travellers in a negative light, and a failure to give Travellers an adequate opportunity to participate in the discussion. In rejecting the complaints the

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Compliance Committee considered that a fair opportunity was afforded to all sides of the debate to air their opinions. While they acknowledged that the debate was clearly curtailed, curtailing debates due to time pressures is not uncommon, and the Compliance Committee having reviewed the programme, as aired, found that the handling of the topic, which was the focus of the programme, was fair.

Finally, it should be noted that all the broadcasts that were subjects to these complaints decisions, predated the introduction on 1 July 2013 of the new Code of Fairness, Objectivity and Impartiality in News and Current Affairs (see IRIS 2013-5/32).

Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, Broadcasting Complaints Decisions, (September 2013)

http://www.bai.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/CCECFDecisions_Sept2013_vFinal.pdf

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