[FR] European Elections and Political Diversity - CSA Supervision

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After issuing a serious alert on 14 May 2014 to the heads of the television channels and radio stations, particularly private generalist ones, on the need to abide by the principle of equity ten days prior to the European Parliament elections, the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (audiovisual regulatory authority - CSA) eventually announced in the following week a number of warnings concerning the serious imbalances it had noted. The principle of equity implies that television services must allocate air time to the candidates (or to the political parties) and their supporters in proportion to their representativeness and their effective involvement in campaigning. As part of its mission to ensure diversity at the time of elections and in accordance with its deliberation of 4 January 2011, the CSA regularly looks into air time throughout every election campaign to make sure that this principle of equity is being observed. On 2 April 2014 the CSA adopted a recommendation on the European Parliament elections, applicable from 14 April 2014 up to the date of the election, directed at all radio and television services. According to this recommendation, editors were to note and inform the CSA each week of the total air time allowed to the lists of candidates, parties and political groups and their supporters, not only in newscasts, news flashes, news magazine programmes and special broadcasts, but also in other broadcasts. On 14 May 2014 the CSA noted the existence of serious imbalances in the breakdown of air time, and in particular that a number of political groups had still had no access to the air waves. It therefore issued a serious alert to the heads of the television channels and radio stations, particularly the private generalist ones, on the necessity of observing the principle of equity in the ten remaining days before the election and the end of the period for applying the recommendation; to no effect. Eight days later, the CSA could only note the persistence, despite its alerts, of substantial imbalance in the distribution of air time and that a number of political parties or groups had still not had access to certain channels and stations. Two days before the end of campaigning, at midnight on Friday 23 May, the CSA therefore emphasised the extreme urgency for radio stations and television channels to abide by the principle of equity by remedying immediately the imbalances noted. It issued a particular warning to the channels TF1 and RMC Découverte (and to a number of radio stations) regarding the risks of failing to observe this requirement. According to CSA figures for the period between 14 April and 16 May, TF1 allowed 49.80% of campaign air time to the Socialist Party, and 32.81% to the UMP party, with the remainder

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shared between five other formations, including the National Front (6.78%), while twelve had no air time at all. On RMC Découverte (a DTV channel), only 24 minutes had been devoted to the elections, and only six parties or groups had been able to express themselves, mainly 'Debout la République' (32.76% of air time) and the left-wing 'Parti de Gauche' (28.67%).

Communiqué de presse du Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel, « Elections européennes : le Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel prononce plusieurs mises en garde », 21 mai 2014

http://www.csa.fr/Espace-Presse/Communiques-de-presse/Elections-europeennes-le-Conseil-superieur-de-l-audiovisuel-prononce-plusieurs-mises-en-garde

Press release from the CSA "European elections: CSA announces a number of warnings", 21 May 2014

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