[IE] BAI issues guidelines on general election coverage

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On 9 November 2015, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) published its new Guidelines on General Election Coverage (for previous guidelines, see IRIS 2014-5/23). The guidelines are designed to provide direction and advice to broadcasters as to how fairness, objectivity and impartiality can be achieved in their coverage of the upcoming general election in Ireland.

Rule 27 of the BAI Code of Fairness, Objectivity and Impartiality in News and Current Affairs provides that broadcasters must comply with guidelines and codes of practice on election and referenda coverage. The new guidelines set out various rules, including on (a) conflicts of interest, (b) opinion polls, (c) social media, (d) political advertising, (e) party political broadcasts, and (f) the moratorium on coverage before the election.

In particular, the moratorium rule provides that radio and television broadcasters shall observe a moratorium on coverage of the General Election, with the moratorium operating from 2 p.m. on the day before the poll takes place and throughout the day of the poll itself until polling stations close. The guidelines elaborate upon application of this rule, including that “broadcasters should avoid airing content (including breaking news stories) that the broadcaster believes is intended and/or likely to influence or manipulate voters’ decisions during the moratorium period. This is an editorial matter to be considered on a case by-case basis”.

The guidelines come into effect immediately upon the dissolution of the “31st Dáil” (current lower house of the Irish parliament) and will remain in effect until the closing of polling stations on the day of the general election.

Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, Rule 27 Guidelines - General Election Coverage, November 2015

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