[BG] A report on the monitoring of personal information during broadcasts

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On 21 June 2016, the Council for Electronic Media (CEM) came out with a report on an incident related to a contestant of the rhythmic gymnastics national team, in which a young woman fell out of an apartment on 6th floor. Without a confirmation by the official authorities, the media categorized the incident as an attempted suicide and reported it extensively.

The purpose of CEM's report is to trace whether the requirements of the Radio and Television Act (RTA) related to the personal life and privacy have been observed during the broadcast of the case, whether there is any risk of a secondary victimization, whether journalistic ethics standards are observed, or whether the media have exceeded professional norms by sensationalising a personal tragedy. CEM's express monitoring covers the central news broadcastings on 14 June 2016 and the morning news programmes on 15 June 2016. The conclusions are as follows:

1. There is overexposure of the topic by bTV and Nova TV (national private TV broadcasters). The focus on the personal drama, the multiple broadcastings from the hospital and the area of the incident, and the use of the whole morning-news programme in both television programmes on 15 June 2016 to cover the topic, are close to sensational reporting. In this way, the media exceeded the limits of normal professional reporting.

2. The broadcasted media content is not in favour of the public interest, and actually opposes it, creating prerequisites for curiosity and provoking the audience to be interested in more details. The news related to the tragic incident take priority in the news and sports news broadcastings (BNT 1, bTV and NOVA TV) and constitute a large, even main, part of the air-time in the morning-news programme (it is a main topic in bTV and NOVA TV).

3. bTV and NOVA TV broadcast details related to the incident and personality of the young girl, which can be perceived as aspects related to her family life and health status. In this respect, the monitoring showed that there were violations of Article 16, para. 1 of the RTA, according to which the media services providers cannot make and broadcast transmissions containing information related to the personal life of citizens without the consent of the persons concerened.

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Regardless of the fact that the interlocutors in the studio or on the phone revealed the information, the questions asked by the journalists urged for specific answers.

However, BNT1 (public TV broadcaster) broadcast information about the rhythmic gymnastics contestant (in the news broadcastings and morning-news programme), which avoided discussion of her personal life as well as the personal life of her relatives, as much as possible. The information about the incident in the radio programmes HORIZONT (public radio broadcaster), DARIK RADIO, and RADIO FOCUS is provided in a focused way within news programmes without discussing personal information.

4. Entering the personal life of the young girl and the speculations surrounding the incident violate the standards of journalism ethics. The broadcast media content brings a risk of a secondary victimisation of the relatives of the girl. The above-cited Code of Ethics requirements have been violated.

ДОКЛАД - Относно наблюдение на Съвета за електронни медии върху отделни предавания за наличие на информация, свързана с личния живот и личната неприкосновеност, при отразяване на инцидента със състезателката по художествена гимнастика Цветелина Стоянова

http://www.cem.bg/downloadFile.php?file=1466529988_doklad_incident_gimnastichka.pdf

CEM's Report, 21 June 2016

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