[FR] TF1 and M6 warned by CSA to limit politicians' speaking time

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On 11 January 2017, the national audiovisual regulatory authority in France (Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel - CSA) announced that it had issued a "stern" warning to TV channels TF1 and M6 for persistently giving excessive airtime to the parliamentary opposition. In the run-up to the forthcoming presidential elections on 23 April and 8 May, the CSA must scrupulously monitor the application of the rules governing electoral news broadcasts. To this end, every fortnight it publishes on its website how much speaking time has been given to politicians in news and information bulletins, magazine shows and other programmes. On 15 December 2016, the CSA calculated the relevant figures for the period between 1 August and 31 December 2016. The campaign for the primary elections of the Republican Party candidate (the party currently in opposition to the presidential and parliamentary majority) took place during this period and there is no specific legislation governing the coverage of these elections by audiovisual media. The CSA therefore announced that speeches by the primary candidates would be taken into account on the same basis as those of other politicians: it was necessary to ensure the balanced representation of all political parties on television.

Although political news in the autumn focused strongly on the right-wing and centre-right primaries, in November, the CSA had already highlighted some huge imbalances on certain radio and television stations. It had asked the channels concerned to make the necessary changes as quickly as possible. On 11 January 2017, the CSA announced that it had taken note of the efforts made by most audiovisual media to ensure that the balance required under current regulations was respected. The imbalances previously observed had already been largely corrected by many radio and television stations. Nevertheless, the disproportionate coverage on TF1 and M6 remained "extremely significant", with excessive exposure given to the parliamentary opposition. For this reason, the CSA warned both channels to ensure that these "profound imbalances are urgently rectified in view of the brevity of the remaining period". From 1 February 2017, the CSA recommendation of 7 September 2016 will govern the rules specific to the presidential election for all radio and television providers, in accordance with the rules laid down in the Act of 25 April 2016 updating the rules applicable to the election. The CSA distinguishes between three periods for the calculation of speaking time and airtime. The fair coverage principle applies from the moment the list of candidates is published to the day before the "official"

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campaign. Only the last two weeks before the election are subject to equal speaking time in the audiovisual media.

Bilan des temps de parole des personnalités politiques (août-décembre 2016), communiqué du CSA du 11 janvier 2017

Overview of politicians' speaking time (August to December 2016), CSA press release of 11 January 2017

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