

[CZ] Broadcasting regulator issued notice of violation of law for Czech TV

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The Czech Broadcasting Law stipulates that a broadcaster shall provide objective and balanced information necessary for opinions to be formed freely; any opinions or evaluating commentaries shall be separated from the news. In its session on 10 January 2017, the Broadcasting Council of the Czech Republic issued a warning to the operator Czech Television following a violation of this provision of the Broadcasting law.

The alleged violation was committed on 9 November 2016, in a programme called "US election night", which was characterized as a news programme. According to the Broadcasting Council, Czech Television broadcast unbalanced and biased reporting in this programme, favouring one party, notably through the systematic and very one-sided criticism of only one of the candidates for US president.

There was a manipulative combination of the use of images and words in the report on the position of American celebrities with regard to both candidates; among those who supported Clinton, Clint Eastwood and Chuck Norris, amongst others, were displayed, that is to say actors who openly supported Donald Trump. This use of images with commentary in the wrong context thus created a false and misleading picture of reality. In the programme, four respondents - citizens of the United States of America - were given a chance to speak. All of these respondents were obvious Clinton supporters and opponents of Trump. The selection of respondents significantly influenced the tone of the show. Therefore, the operator committed a breach of the duty to provide objective and balanced information required for the free formation of opinions.

The Broadcasting Council also stated that situations occurred where the principle that opinions or evaluating commentaries shall be separated from the news was not respected. A potential victory of Trump was presented as dangerous, and his potential victory was interpreted as a negative phenomenon, namely by using emotionally coloured terms referring to natural disasters, (states in which the majority voted for Trump were marked in red and called a "tsunami"). In addition, the information was given, that when Trump becomes president, many Americans would prefer to emigrate from the United States. Emotionally tinged questions by moderators such as: "So far, therefore, in the opinion of some experts, can Donald Trump's victory be a threat to security, global security may we say?" had the

same effect.

The main and, apart from a few marginal mentions, the only source of information from the media environment was selected from the US television channel CNN, which was repeatedly included in the programme. Even a few minutes of direct inputs were broadcast. According to the Broadcasting Council, this is a television programme which, before the elections, openly sympathized with candidate Clinton. This source selection for information also contributed to the overall unilateral tone of the show on US election night.

The Broadcasting Council stated that these parts of the programme had been in breach of the obligation to ensure that news and political affairs programmes follow the principles of objectivity and balance.

If a broadcaster breaches any obligations set out in the Broadcasting Law or any conditions stipulated in the law, then the Council shall warn such a broadcaster of the breach and shall grant such a broadcaster a grace period to take corrective action. The Council established the deadline for corrections as within 7 days of receiving the notice. Any further infringement of the same kind may result in a fine.

Tisková zpráva Rady z 10.1.2017 str.6

http://www.rrtv.cz/cz/files/press/TZ_01_17.pdf

