[CZ] Broadcasting Council issues bias fine

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On 30 April 2019, the Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting decided that the television broadcasting operator Barrandov Televizní Studio was guilty of committing an offence by broadcasting the Moje zprávy (My News) programme on 20 November 2018 at 8.05 p.m. on Barrandov TV. Part of the reportage Ryba smrdí od hlavy (The Fish Stinks from the Head) included allegations of problematic orders that were presented as facts, with stakeholders and those against whom the allegations were made not being able to comment on the alleged facts, and of the case being presented unilaterally without including any relevant opposition statements. The programme presented a clear, predetermined stance and as such, could be considered biased and an attempt to influence the viewers' attitude towards the programme maker's intentions. The operator therefore did not provide the objective and balanced information necessary for the free creation of opinions. The term "objectivity" implies several dimensions, of which the Council considers accuracy to be the most decisive: the report must correspond to reality, it must be transparent, that is to say, journalists must mention their information sources, and journalists must not put their own assessments into the report. This one-sidedness is to be understand as a hidden form of partisanism, where some controversial situations are suppressed in favor of the views of others. In other words, the principle of equilibrium rests on the requirement for the "equal representation of alternatives in the scope and adaptation of reporting". The Council imposed a fine of CZK 200 000 (EUR 8 000) for the offence. The Council's decision can be challenged in court.

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