[RO] Recommendations about the Covid-19 media coverage

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On 25 February 2020, the National Audiovisual Council (*Consiliul Naţional al Audiovizualului*, CNA), the audiovisual regulator of Romania, issued a press release regarding the obligation for broadcasters to treat any new topic regarding the coronavirus (Covid-19) epidemic responsibly. Further to this press release, on 27 February 2020, the Council issued two recommedations for audiovisual broadcasters, both public and commercial, to air the audio and TV advertising spots launched by the Romanian Government as part of the information campaign on the prevention of infection with the new type of coronavirus (see related articles in IRIS 2007-1/29, IRIS 2007-8/30, IRIS 2011-10/37, IRIS 2012-3/31, and 2014-1/40).

Following the appearance on some Romanian TV channels of alarmist and insufficiently verified information regarding the new coronavirus epidemic, on 25 February 2020, the National Audiovisual Council reminded broadcasters that they are obliged to deal with the news and debates related to this topic rigorously and responsibly. In this regard, the official positions communicated by the Romanian authorities managing this situation should have priority, the purpose of all those involved being to minimise the spread of this virus.

The CNA has announced that it would monitor the audiovisual programmes for the way information is transmitted on this subject, the approach based on official communications being the only one able to really help the population in such cases.

Through two recommedations issued on 27 February, it asked the audiovisual mass media responsible for broadcasting public and commercial programmes at local, regional and national level, to broadcast, under public notice, the audiovisual advertising spots included in the information campaign intended for the Romanian population on how to reduce the risks of being infected by and spreading diseases with the new type of coronavirus .

The advertising spots have to be broadcast every hour, before the first group of advertisements. The information campaign is carried out by the Ministry of Internal Affairs through the Department for Emergency situations.

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According to Article 6, paragraph (2) of Audiovisual Law No. 504/2002, with further modifications and completions, in the case of commercial media, the editorial decision to broadcast over the radio or on TV lies exclusively with the broadcaster.

As for public broadcasters, according to Article 9 of Law No. 41/1994 regarding the organisation and functioning of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Society and of the Romanian Television Society, republished with amendments and completions, the public broadcasting services are obliged to transmit, as a top priority and free of charge, communications or messages of public interest received from the Romanian Parliament, the President of Romania, the Supreme Defence Council of the Country or from the Romanian Government.

Press release regarding broadcasters' obligation to treat any coronavirus topic responsibly – 25 February 2020

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