[FR] Council for Ethical Journalism issues its first opinions and condemns BFM TV

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The new (and controversial) C*onseil de déontologie journalistique et de médiation* (Council for Ethical Journalism and Mediation – CDJM), created at the end of 2019, has published its first three opinions, which were adopted at a plenary meeting on 18 May 2020.

The CDJM is a body for mediation between journalists, the media, news agencies and the public on all matters linked to ethical journalism. Any citizen can ask the CDJM for its opinion on journalistic activity that is considered problematic. The CDJM's members come from three groups, each one equally represented in its management bodies: journalists, the media and the public. As a self-regulatory body, the CDJM issues its decisions alone, fully independent of political or economic authorities. It has been accepted as a member of the Alliance of Independent Press Councils of Europe, an informal network of independent content regulators for both press and broadcast media. According to its president, Patrick Eveno, "The CDJM is neither a professional union nor a 'thought tribunal', it only gives opinions on issues linked to ethical journalism, but never on matters relating to the editorial freedom of all media. France is therefore the 18th European Union member state to establish such a body for mediation between journalists, publishers and the public in order to promote high-quality news services."

In its first opinion, the CDJM dealt with an interview broadcast on BFM TV on 17 February 2020 involving one of its reporters and Juan Branco, the lawyer of Russian activist Piotr Pavlenski, who had been accused of publishing intimate videos of a former government spokesman. The CDJM had concluded that certain rules of ethical journalism had been breached and had written to BFM, but had not received a reply. In particular, the opinion states that: "The interview shows a bias against the interviewee that goes beyond the freedom of investigative journalism. Journalists who make a serious accusation against a person must back it up with evidence and give the person concerned the right to reply." This had not been the case in the interview concerned. In particular, the CDJM thought the reporter's final comments, "The more we hear from you, the more we wonder if Piotr Pavlenski is only acting under your instructions," breached ethical standards concerning unsubstantiated accusations and the right to reply.

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Meanwhile, the CDJM dismissed a complaint about the 20 February 2020 edition of the weekly magazine Paris Match, which contained a photo of Piotr Pavlenski's arrest. It felt that ethical standards had not been breached in this case. It also decided that ethical rules had been respected in the broadcast of reports about animal rights activists during the news programme *Journal 19/20* on France 3 Pays de la Loire on 5 February 2020, which had been the subject of several complaints.

The CDJM says it has received 63 referrals since the start of the year in relation to 31 articles or broadcasts. Twenty of these were declared inadmissible.

CDJM, Avis sur les saisines no 20-014 à 20-036, no 20-044, et no 20-007

https://cdjm.org/2020/05/19/le-cdjm-rend-ses-premiers-avis/

CDJM, opinions on referral nos. 20-014 to 20-036, 20-044 and 20-007

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