[ES] Spain's Central Electoral Commission urges RTVE to be extremely rigorous in its reporting during election periods

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The Spanish far-right political party Vox filed a complaint with the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) against Radiotelevisión Española (RTVE), the national public broadcaster, during the national election period of July 2023. The representative of VOX argued that the principles of impartiality and neutrality had been infringed by RTVE in the report entitled “Las noches romanas de Mérida” (“The Roman nights of Merida”). The complaint was based on certain statements referring to cancellations of cultural events in a number of Spanish villages after the regional elections of May 2023. According to VOX, these statements linked the political party with censorship actions and the party therefore concluded that they were designed to influence voting intentions during an election period.

After reviewing the case, the CEC upheld the action in part, requiring RTVE to exercise the utmost rigour in its treatment of information affecting the electoral contest (Agreement 524/2023). Despite the fact that RTVE considered that the reported infringement had not taken place t and alleged that the report in question represented the exercise of the fundamental right to information, the CEC considered that two of the denounced statements were, in fact, biased. On the one hand, it pointed out that the inclusion of a reference to the "far-right" introduced value-laden elements into the information content. On the other hand, the CEC’s ruling noted that misleading information was included. Thus, RTVE was reprimanded for the fact that the content broadcast gave the impression that the acts of censorship referred to were directly caused by VOX when in some of the cases mentioned this party had no capacity to be involved in the decision. However, although the CEC considered the above to be a minor transgression, it observed that the publicly owned media must be extremely careful to respect the neutrality of information during election periods, as required by Article 66.1 of the Spanish Organic Law 5/1989 of the General Electoral System (LOREG).

It is worth mentioning that this is not the first complaint filed by VOX against RTVE during an election period. Thus, in the regional elections of May 2023, the political party also alleged that the public service media organisation had included biased information when reporting on alliances between Vox and the Partido Popular to form town councils. On that occasion, the CEC closed the complaint on the ground that there was no indication of any breach of the principles of political pluralism, media neutrality and equality (Agreement 443/2023).

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Agreement of Spain's Central Electoral Commission on the complaint filed by VOX against RTVE with regard to an extract of the report broadcast on 15 July 2023, "Las noches romanas de Mérida", which VOX considers to be in breach of the principle of informative neutrality (Agreement 524/2023)

Report "Las noches romanas de Mérida"

Organic Law 5/1985 of 19 June 1985 on the General Electoral System

Agreement of Spain's Central Electoral Commission on the complaint filed by VOX against RTVE with regard to the news coverage of the local councils' constitution in the special programme "Nuevos Ayuntamientos" broadcast on 17 June 2023 (Agreement 443/2023)

Special programme "Nuevos Ayuntamientos"

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