

European TV Business Ethics: Legitimizing Public Financial Contribution To Public Tv Broadcasters

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Recent developments in European Legislation include major reforms concerning TV financing: the European directive 2007/65/CE allows extra advertising time per day to TV broadcasters; UK and French regulations instituted new mixtures between advertising and public contributions in the financing of Public broadcasters; and a Committee for restructuring the Greek Public broadcaster was announced by the previous Greek Government. These initiatives reflect the need for legitimisation of the actual amounts of public financing in Public TV Broadcasting companies.

Indeed, the obligation of the Government to finance Public broadcasters is not under question, as it is imposed by the Constitutional Law. Both the public debate and the legal actions undertaken by private TV broadcasters focused on the need for reduction of the amounts allocated or the need for minimisation of advertising screening in Public TV. To answer the question, balancing between Public Interest (General Interest) and Competition Law, the European Legal System (Directives, National Laws, European Court Decisions) attempted to quantify the quality of Public TV programming. By doing this, they instituted measurable criteria to identify if the budget allocated to TV programmes, imposed by the Constitutional Mission of the Public TV service, matches the public financing effort.

This paper, based on the above mentioned developments, attempts to codify these criteria and to evaluate their pertinence under all circumstances (TV business models), especially under the actual unstable economic environment. Examples from French and Greek TV cases will be used to specify the quantitative criteria and evaluate their relevance in the quality of the TV programmes.