

**Recommendations
from the Catalonia Broadcasting Council
for Future Electoral Cycles**

The activity of the broadcast media is a fundamental part of the process of shaping public opinion in a democratic society, as it is the main way in which information is disseminated and opinions transmitted. Our legal system recognises this reality and has consequently established a series of principles based on media activity, which are set out in practically identical terms to the different legal regulations already prepared in this area. These cover the following principles:

- a)** The objectivity, truth and impartiality of information.
- b)** The separation of information from opinion, the identification of the people who defend each of the above and their free expression. (...)
- c)** Respect for political, religious, social, cultural and linguistic pluralism.
- d)** Respect for people's honour, reputation and privacy, as well as all the rights and freedoms recognised under the Constitution.
- e)** The protection of children and adolescents.
- f)** Respect for the values of equality as recognised under article 14 of the Constitution.

Moreover, the "right of access of significant political and social groups" is a Constitutional right recognised by the public broadcast media.

However, these general principles have been the object of insufficient legislative and regulatory development. If not determined more precisely, the interpretation and application of these principles could generate doubts among media managers and give rise to information on electoral processes that could generate a number of controversies.

To that end, the Catalonia Broadcasting Council has sent this document to all broadcasters and their representative associations. It includes a set of recommendations, a reminder of the most general parameters of the law and a list of the origin of rights currently in force.

By way of introduction, it is important to mention the following general parameters:

1. These recommendations are addressed to the media that belong to the Catalan Radio and Television Corporation and local operators. Local operators

rators are comprised of five categories: municipal and private television stations and municipal, commercial and educational/cultural radio stations. Public broadcasters are subject to the same system.

2. All local television stations, regardless of their ownership, are subject to the same system. This does not mean that private local stations (as in the commercial radio) may not have, if they like, an individual identity as shown in a specific editorial line, which neither excludes or contradicts the pluralist nature required of their news programming.
3. The contracting of political advertising is banned on national and local television (both municipal and private) and on municipal radio stations. It is also banned on educational/cultural radio stations, which may only broadcast institutional publicity. Commercial radio is subject to the same system as the written press.
4. During the electoral period (i.e., the time between the calling of an election and voting day), the insertion of advertising and the distribution of news

time among the different political forces are subject to the conditions of the Electoral Boards.

In this context, the Catalonia Broadcasting Council would like to formulate the following recommendations:

Recommendations aimed at Political Forces and their Candidates, Representatives, etc.

1. The relationship between journalists and politicians must be based on the criteria of independence, mutual respect and the refusal to counsel any type of interference.
2. Any conflict that may arise with regard to the activity of the broadcast media should not be the object of public controversy, but be resolved within the heart of the Electoral Boards or the Catalonia Broadcasting Council (according to when the conflict occurred).

Recommendations aimed at Public Authorities

3. The broadcasting of institutional programmes and messages should be limited to informational content and the promotion of citizen participation. Participation in these programmes should not be limited to the members or representatives of government teams in municipalities (in the case of local elections) or respective governments (in the case of other electoral processes).
4. The Council recommends that during electoral periods, public broadcasters shore up the mechanisms they use to ensure the professionalism and independence of their journalistic activity and not allow significant changes in their employees' work conditions.

Recommendations aimed at Public Authorities

5. News programmes broadcast by local operators should promote the presence of the different local political forces in proportion to the electoral and

institutional strength they gained in the last comparable elections. The same criteria shall apply, with the corresponding adaptations, to national operators.

6. The organisation of debates, talk shows or round tables is an ideal mechanism for improving public information and facilitating opinion forming. The heads of each outlet should check that these open debates include representatives of the different political forces and the different social collectives in the corresponding territory.
7. In monitoring news programming relevant to pluralism the coverage of public acts, debates, festivals, opening ceremonies, etc., is also included.
8. The need to distinguish between news and opinion makes it necessary to ensure the neutrality of information and to disregard any element that could directly or indirectly lead to inconsiderateness towards any political force.

9. Information on participation by relevant political personalities from outside the local environment in local events should bear in mind the matters proposed in point 5 above.
10. Monitoring the campaigns of the different political forces and broadcasting corresponding information should be carried out in such a way as to ensure equality of conditions, both with regard to the way information is covered and the length of the news items shown. Proportionality is established as the general guideline in this area.
11. The Catalonia Broadcasting Council calls on the public operators to establish operating criteria to effectively materialise the right of access to other significant collectives who may not be covered by the matters established under point 5 above.