

Manufactured Media: Spanish Public Television under Political Pressure

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The Council of Europe recently released a report that warns that political pressure is being put on Spanish public television broadcasting (Televisión Española, TVE). The report draws attention to similar situations of politics pushing broadcasting in Hungary, Romania, Italy, Serbia and Ukraine.

It is not the first time that the Council of Europe – an international organization which includes 47 countries around the world and promotes democratic values – criticizes the way that Spanish public television presents the news. The last time was during the 2004 legislation when the *Partido Popular* (Popular Party) – the right-wing Spanish party – was governing the state.

Nowadays, to become the president of the public television, the candidate needs the approval of the majority of the Members of the Spanish Parliament. That was an amendment put in place by the Popular Party in 2012, before then it was necessary to gain the approval of two thirds of the Chamber. Leopoldo Gonzalez Echenique is the current president of TVE, however, he does not have the approval of the official opposition party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, the left-wing party).

In the report, the broadcasting firm referred to is TVE News. Its current director, Julio Somoano, wrote, interestingly enough, a thesis in 2005 called *Estrategia de comunicación para el triunfo del Partido Popular en las próximas elecciones* (Communication strategy for the victory of the Popular Party in the next elections).

This seems like far too many coincidences for a public television network that should be an impartial and apolitical media meant to represent all the Spaniards. But the truth is that the Council of Europe is not the first one to denounce this, TVE has received an increasing number of the complaints sent by the anonymous citizens. Some of the more notable situations of misinformation were when this television network did not report on the different rallies against the social cutbacks on the 15th of September 2012. Another example of blatant misinformation was when they decided to ignore the 1,5 million people rally in the streets of Barcelona claiming for the independence of Catalonia and slot them in the fifth position (on 11th of September 2012).

Spain is in a state of extreme economic crisis, extreme social crisis, extreme corruption and, now, the international organisms are alerted by possible political influence in the public media – you tell me where the good news is.

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