

4. PROGRAMME COMPLAINTS

During 2004 the Authority was asked to consider and adjudicate on a number of complaints mainly concerning partiality and unfair treatment in news reporting and current affairs programming.

Out of a total of 11 cases which the Authority considered during the year under review, only one concerned a complaint about a programme which was not a news or a current affairs programme.

There were three letters of complaint received by the Authority which referred to the same complaint and another two were likewise considered to be one complaint and included as such in the following tables.

Three other requests presented to the Authority for adjudication were not decided upon by the Authority for the reasons stated further below.

Table 1 hereunder illustrates the number, sources, and adjudication results with regard to news and current affairs programme complaints and Table 2 to other programme complaints. Table 3 shows the total number of complaints made about each particular station.

TABLE 1 - NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMME COMPLAINTS ANALYSED BY SOURCE

SOURCE	NUMBER	ADJUDICATION RESULTS		
		UPHELD	PARTLY UPHELD	NOT UPHELD
Malta Labour Party	1		1	
Alternattiva Demokratika	6	3		3
Department of Health	1			1
Renato Costigan	1	1		
Saviour Balzan	1		1	

TABLE 2 - OTHER PROGRAMME COMPLAINTS ANALYSED BY SOURCE

SOURCE	NUMBER	ADJUDICATION RESULTS		
		UPHELD	PARTLY UPHELD	NOT UPHELD
Nidal Binni	1			1

TABLE 3 - COMPLAINTS ANALYSED BY STATION / ENTITY

STATION / ENTITY	NUMBER	ADJUDICATION RESULTS		
		UPHELD	PARTLY UPHELD	NOT UPHELD
Super 1 TV	2	1		1
TVM/PBS	4	1	2	1
NET TV	4	1		3
Radio 101 & NET TV	1			1

The Malta Labour Party requested the right to reply to a Press Conference addressed by the Prime Minister and broadcast live by TVM in its news bulletin on 23rd March, 2004, claiming that



the Prime Minister had spoken about his cabinet formation and items of general interest to the country and had at times referred specifically to the Malta Labour Party. The Authority partly upheld the Malta Labour Party's request and ordered PBS to broadcast the Labour Party's reaction to the Press Conference where first preference was to be given to the Leader of the Opposition.

Alternattiva Demokratika had complained that Net TV had not even mentioned two of the Party's exponents, Dr. Harry Vassallo and Prof. Arnold Cassola, in connection with a bio-diesel recycling project organized by Alternattiva Demokratika at Edible Oil Ltd., in its news coverage on 8th April, 2004. Alternattiva Demokratika's complaint was upheld.

The Authority upheld another complaint by Alternattiva Demokratika regarding lack of video coverage in a news report about a party activity organized in Valletta together with representatives of the Green party in the European Parliament and carried in the TVM news which was broadcast on 6th March, 2004.

Alternattiva Demokratika had also claimed that NET News were broadcasting false news about Alternattiva Demokratika and that this had happened again on 10th May, 2004, when NET News broadcast a misleading statement issued by the Nationalist Party regarding Alternattiva Demokratika without airing Alternattiva's reply. The complaint was upheld.

The Authority did not uphold a complaint by Alternattiva Demokratika against NET TV regarding the broadcasting of speeches made by Nationalist Party exponents at the Nationalist Party's General Council which Alternattiva claimed contained false and misleading statements about Alternattiva Demokratika.

On 18th May, 2004, Alternattiva Demokratika complained that PBS was not mentioning Alternattiva Demokratika's candidates for the European Parliament Elections thereby putting the party at a disadvantage as the names of the candidates of the other political parties were continually being mentioned on the other political parties' television stations. Two other letters of complaint from Alternattiva Demokratika dated 21st and 22nd May also referred to Alternattiva Demokratika candidates standing for the European Parliamentary elections and were included with that of 18th May, 2004. The complaint was not upheld.

Two other letters of complaint from Alternattiva Demokratika regarded the programmes *Nghiduha Kif Inhi* broadcast of Radio 101 on 26th May, 2004, and *Ghax Nemnu fi-Ewropa* broadcast on NET TV on 30th May, 2004. Both these letters referred to allegations made in these programmes to an alliance between the Malta Labour Party and Alternattiva Demokratika and both were considered as a single complaint which was not upheld by the Authority.



On 1st October 2004, the Health Department wrote to the Authority regarding a complaint it had lodged against Super 1 TV objecting to video shots of hospital scenes broadcast in a television news feature on 31st August 2004 without obtaining prior permission from St Luke's Hospital authorities. The complaint was not upheld.

The Authority upheld a complaint by Mr. Renato Joseph Costigan that in their news coverage on Saturday 29th November, 2003, One News had misrepresented comments he had made in the programme Xarabank broadcast on 28th November, 2003, about the treatment he received from the Dockyard Management.

Mr Nidal Binni had complained that comments made by a psychologist in the programme *Andrea* broadcast on NET TV on 25th February 2004 could have been taken to refer to dietary pills which he imported. The complaint was not upheld.

The Authority partly upheld a complaint by Mr. Saviour Balzan regarding the programme *Bondi Plus* which dealt with the purchase of the building housing Malta's embassy in Brussels and which was broadcast on TVM on 5th October, 2004. The Authority concluded that Mr Balzan had been unfairly treated and misquoted on two points and directed TVM to broadcast the Authority's findings in the next edition of the programme.

The Authority did not continue with its hearing of a complaint from Mr. Edric Micallef, Deputy Mayor of Marsaxlokk Local Council, after the station broadcast a remedy on 24th April, 2004. Mr Micallef had objected to a news commentary broadcast on Radio 101 on 17th March, 2004, which he alleged had insinuated that failure to show Independence Day as a public holiday in calendar that he had published was disrespectful.

Fr. Dionysius Mintoff and Mr. Joseph Abela, M.P., Director of the Peace Laboratory and Coordinator of the Peace Laboratory, respectively, asked the Authority to provide a remedy in respect of remarks made by Minister Tonio Borg during the programme *Bondi Plus* broadcast on 1st June, 2004. Complainants were asked by the Authority to refer their request for a remedy to the station concerned in terms of article 21 of the Press Act.

The Authority did not take cognizance of a complaint from the Malta Labour Party regarding misrepresentation of film material of a Labour Party mass meeting in a programme shown on NET TV on 10th June, 2004, as the complaint was not sent in writing to the station in accordance with the procedure set out in the Authority's Code for the investigation of such complaints.

