

MONITORING REPORTS ON THE MEDIA COVERAGE IN THE FIRST TEN DAYS OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Skopje, 10 October 2017 – The monitoring conducted by the Agency in the first ten days of the 2017 Local Elections campaign (25 September-4 October) shows that the television stations at the state and regional levels and the radio stations covered by the monitoring were generally focused on reporting about the campaigns of the two large coalitions led by the VMRO/DPMNE and SDSM, respectively, which have the largest number of verified lists of candidates for mayors and councilors.

In this, the broadcasters strove to ensure equal treatment, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in their reports on the campaigning activities, frequently with more time dedicated to the VMRO/DPMNE-led coalition as a result of their reactions and criticism against the government's activities and policies.

Due to this, lack of balanced reporting was found only with the Alfa TV, which, compared to the state television stations that have a similar way of realization of their newscasts, set aside a notably longer airtime for the VMRO/DPMNE-led coalition.

As regards the Public Broadcaster, MRT, there were deviations from the legally prescribed structure of the news (30%+30%+30%+10%), however, no violations were found with regard to balanced reporting, because it ensured quantitatively and qualitatively equal treatment within the legally-determined segments of the news in which they reported about the

campaigning activities of both the government and the opposition parties. Furthermore, the four monitored services made efforts to report on the activities of the non-parliamentary parties (the Left) and the independent candidates.

I should also be noted that some of the MRT's programming services set aside more airtime to report on the daily events in the country and the world, which is their primary obligation both as media outlets and as a public broadcasting service. However, until the end of the campaign, they should pay more attention to the legal requirements concerning the structure of their news.

The general conclusion is that the news editorial boards of the media outlets were trying to maintain the logic of the concrete political process, i.e. to present, above all, the campaigning activities of the mayoral candidates, and not primarily of the leaders of certain parties/coalitions. Nevertheless, this communication practice does not always depend on the will, conscience or editorial experience of these boards, but one has to take into account the electoral concepts and the organizational "technicalities" of the parties/coalitions themselves, i.e. how the appearance before the electorate was performed (was it a rally, meetings with citizens, or a promotion of projects), who was given the priority in the particular approach, how long did this campaigning appearance last, how the media reported about it within the time planned for the news item and, finally, if the media outlet had sufficiently developed network of correspondents for such an electoral promotional pace and such a reporting scope.

In this sense, from a broader point of view in terms of the "information intentions" of the media outlets, the judgement about the balance in the reporting so far about the activities of the participants in the electoral process certainly took into account the other journalistic/media forms of reporting

on the campaign – above all, the interviews and the debates. In this, also taken into account was the communication practice of certain political parties/coalitions, in this communication segment, to ignore more or less explicitly the editorial attempts at organizing pre-election media face-offs for various reasons.

All monitoring reports on the first 10 days of the election campaign are available at the following links:

Monitoring reports on the national broadcasters

Monitoring reports on the regional broadcasters