

A SMALL AMOUNT OF INFORMATION ON THE CAMPAIGN IN THE SECOND ROUND; TWO TV STATIONS FAILED TO ENSURE UNBIASED COVERAGE

Skopje, 3 November 2017

Manner of reporting

The broadcasters covered by the monitoring in the second round of the 2017 Local Elections, covered the campaign less intensely, generally trying to provide the participants in the elections with equal access to their programmes. In the last ten days of the election campaign (from 18 until 27 October 2017) covered by today's reports, violation of the requirement for unbiased coverage of the elections was found with only two television stations that air programme at the state level – Alfa TV and Nova TV. Based on the monitoring of their overall programmes, bias was detected in favour of the positions and reactions of the VMRO/DPMNE-led coalition. The Agency will submit requests for initiating misdemeanor proceedings before the competent court within the legal deadline.

The monitoring of election-related news coverage in the programming services of the Macedonian Radio and Television during the second round of elections showed once again that the provision of the Electoral Code regarding the distribution of airtime within the news programmes is inappropriate for journalistic reporting on the part of a public broadcaster. Namely, the Agency has already publicly sought amendment to the legally stipulated obligation to divide airtime based on the principle "30% for the governing parties, 30 % for the opposition parties, 30 % for the daily events in the country and the world, and 10 % for the non-parliamentary parties". In

the second round, there were fewer candidates, coalition support between parties from the government and the opposition and three non-parliamentary candidates. These conditions showed rather clearly that, despite ensuring balanced reporting – both qualitatively and quantitatively – on the participants in the campaign, the public broadcaster will still face the choice between adhering to its role as a public broadcaster that should, before all, inform citizens about all current events in the country and the world, and depriving the audience of these information so as not to exceed the 30 % limit. Therefore, the regulator considers that, the proportionally longer airtime dedicated to daily news should not constitute grounds for concluding there is unbalanced and biased reporting.

Free political presentation

The Public Broadcaster and the Parliamentary Channel met their obligation to provide free political presentation of the participants in the elections in the second round of the local election campaign as well. The data indicate that only the mayoral candidates of the coalitions led by VMRO/DPMNE and SDSM used the opportunity for free presentation in the media.

Paid political advertising

During the second round of the local election campaign, the largest amount of paid political advertising was registered on the part of the VMRO/DPMNE-led coalition (around 26 hours), followed by the coalition led by the SDSM (around 11 hours), Besa (some 5 hours) and DUI (around 4 hours).

Of the television stations covered by the monitoring, Nova TV aired the largest amount of advertisements (nearly 12 hours), followed by Sitel TV and Alsat-M TV (around 5 hours each).

The overview of the paid political advertising may be downloaded at [this link](#).

The individual monitoring reports on the broadcasters covering the period 18-27 October 2017 are available at this link