

NEW AMENDMENTS TO THE ELECTORAL CODE ONLY FIVE DAYS BEFORE THE START OF THE CAMPAIGN

Skopje, 28 March 2019 – The Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted amendments to the Electoral Code through a shortened procedure and without any more extensive debate, only five days before the start of the election campaign. The goal of these amendments was allegedly to harmonize the provisions of the Electoral Code, however, what was achieved is exactly the opposite, especially with regard to paid political advertising.

At the same time, the provisions regulating the distribution of airtime percentages of the Public Broadcaster's information programmes, and the airtime allocated for free presentation on the Parliamentary Channel remain unharmonized and unadjusted to the specificities of these elections.

In July, last year, the Agency reacted – and still maintains the stance – that paid political advertising during electoral processes should not be paid for by the citizens, i.e. no funds from the state budget should be allocated for this purpose.

The Agency appeals that, after the completion of these elections, a broad debate be opened with all relevant stakeholders, on amending the Electoral Code. Only in this way will be legal provisions be harmonized adequately, before the next elections are held. This is also in tune with the recommendations of the Venice Commission, according to which no changes to the fundamental segments of an electoral law should be made within less than a year before elections.