

PRESSURE AGAINST THE AGENCY FROM THE “WE CAN” COALITION CONTINUES

Skopje, June 21, 2020 – The Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services strongly refutes the accusations made by the SDSM spokesperson in her statement today, that the Agency puts the VMRO/DPMNE party in a privileged position and harms the BESA Movement .

According to the candidate lists verified by the State Election Commission, the BESA Movement is part of the “We Can” Coalition and, therefore, it may be given a number of minutes for paid political advertising exclusively within the time limit allotted to this coalition.

A new version of the Guidelines for Paid Political Advertising Limits was drafted almost four months ago, followed by a public hearing to which all interested parties were invited to comment on its content. Until the date the Guidelines were adopted on 19 June 2020, neither the SDSM nor BESA had submitted any remarks or proposals whatsoever. The Guidelines were adopted unanimously by all members of the Agency’s Council.

Moreover, the distribution of time for paid political advertising in the current Guidelines has been made in a completely identical way as that for the 2019 Presidential Elections, given that the same provision of the Electoral Code applies. In that election cycle, the presidential candidate supported by the SDSM and the coalition, Stevo Pendarovski, was allotted 4 minutes, i.e. twice as much time as the opposition-backed candidates Gordana Siljanovska and Blerim Reka who were given two minutes each. At that time, SDSM did not have any remarks or reactions regarding the allotted

minutes, whereas now, although the same logic has been implemented, it is making unfounded accusations against the Agency, guided by narrow party interests.

The Agency has been stating repeatedly its disagreement, both publicly and through sending a reaction to the competent institutions regarding the above-mentioned legal provision, to the effect that it does not provide equal conditions for all participants in the election process and that it is not applicable to different election cycles. Still, this time too, the Agency invested efforts to implement the legal provision accordingly, in correlation with the other provisions of the Electoral Code.

In the future, instead of incorporating their own solutions, the political parties should leave the creation of electoral legislation to the professionals, as legislation is one of the most important preconditions for conducting democratic elections.