

BALANCE SHOULD BE ENSURED IN THE SPECIAL INFORMATION PROGRAMMES

Skopje, 2 July 2020 – Yesterday, the Agency received a complaint from the Democratic Union for Integration – DUI, in which it reacted against the way the debate shows aired in the media's programmes had been organized.

The Agency immediately inspected the data collected through monitoring of the electoral media representation to date, and wishes to remind the broadcasters and the participants in the election campaign of the following:

Should they decide to broadcast debates or other types of special information programmes (face-offs, interviews, current affairs news programmes, special shows, etc.), broadcasters should ensure equal access and fairness, balance and impartiality. In these shows, **balance is achieved by observing the principle of proportionality according to the number of verified candidate lists**, meaning that the broadcasters are obliged to invite all participants who have the same number of lists with verified candidates, regardless of whether they are parliamentary or non-parliamentary entities, and regardless of the language in which they broadcast their programme. **The format of these shows – face-off (between two candidates) or debate (between several candidates) – is decided on by the broadcasters themselves in accordance with their independent editorial policies.**

The assessment of whether these obligations are met is drawn after the end of the campaign, and not for each individual show in particular, but for the series of interviews, debate shows or face-offs that the broadcaster will have been organized during the election campaign.

The monitoring so far has shown that there are broadcasters who need to make an additional effort and invite all entities with the same number of lists so as to ensure balance in the debates until the end of the campaign. On the other hand, there are cases in which the participants in the election campaign refuse to participate in the debate shows of certain media outlets. The broadcasters should announce this in their shows and, at the same time, be careful how many times they rerun the debate so as not to create an imbalance.

In this context, and bearing in mind that these elections are organized in conditions of a pandemic, the Agency appeals to the participants in the election campaign to participate in the special information programmes because these are one of the ways to inform the citizens directly about their election programmes and make it possible for them to compare the offers.