

Report on the Monitoring of Media Coverage of the 2020 Early Parliamentary Elections Published

Skopje, 23 July 2020 – The Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services prepared a Report on the Monitoring of Media Coverage of the 2020 Early Parliamentary Elections. The monitoring covered the five radio and television programme services provided by the Public Broadcaster (MRT1, MRT2, the Parliamentary Channel, Macedonian Radio 1, Macedonian Radio 3, Programme in the Albanian Language) and the national commercial television stations: Alsat-M, Alfa TV, Kanal 5 TV, Sitel TV, Telma TV, 21-M TV, Klan TV, Shenja TV, and 24 TV. The other programme services were monitored upon complaints received. Subjected to monitoring was their entire 24-hour programme, of which all aired forms of electoral media representation were analyzed and coded, while the analysis of the daily news editions was conducted on the central edition of the news. The monitoring was conducted implementing the already well-established Methodology, which is based on the international election monitoring standards and practices relevant around the world.

Considering that these were parliamentary elections, in line with the Electoral Code, balance in the news and the special news programmes was achieved by following the principle of proportional distribution of airtime among the participants in the election campaign based on the number of verified lists of MP candidates. There were fifteen participants in this election campaign, five of whom came from parties that had already been in parliament, whereas the rest were non-parliamentary entities.

The monitoring showed that, generally, the four programme services of the Public Broadcasting Service provided balance in their news by meeting the dual formula for airtime distribution in the news, although they should have set aside a little bit more time for the daily news so that they would fulfill their role as public services – to convey relevant information on the developments of the related to the Covid-19 pandemic in all parts of the country.

On the other hand, the analysis showed that none of the commercial television stations had managed to fully implement the principle of reporting proportionately to the number of verified candidate lists and the intensity of the campaign. Some of the television stations decided to focus on the five participants in the election campaign who had sprung out from the last parliamentary composition and to ignore the other ten non-parliamentary entities. Others decided to report on the non-parliamentary participants in the campaign as well, without focusing on achieving an airtime balance between the two largest coalitions – “We can” and “Renewal of Macedonia”.

As regards the obligation of the national broadcasters to adjust their programmes so as to be able to also inform the people with sensory impairments about the elections, only MRT1 and 24 Vesti TV met this obligation, but they had already been providing news in sign language before. The failure to meet this obligation on the part of the other television stations was due to the fact that such an undertaking requires both finances and time, regardless of whether the adjustment would be made using sign language or by means of textual explanations.

The Report on the Media Coverage of the 2020 Early Parliamentary Elections will be submitted for consideration to the Agency Council which will also decide on initiating misdemeanor proceedings against the broadcasters who had failed to provide balanced reporting.

The Report may be downloaded at the following link:

Report on the Media Coverage of the Elections – 2020 Early
Parliamentary Elections