

2020 Early Local Elections: Monitoring Results

Skopje, 23 December 2020 – Based on its monitoring over the broadcasters during the Early Mayoral Elections in the municipalities of Shtip and Plasnica, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services prepared two reports – one from monitoring the media coverage of the elections, and the other – on the paid political advertising during the campaign (21 November – 10 December 2020) .

The monitoring of the media coverage of the elections covered 20 programme services, of which 11 national television stations, the Public Service (MRT 1 and the Parliamentary Channel), 3 regional TV channels (M Net-HD, Iris and Star), 2 local television stations (Uskana Media and Gurra), and 2 radio stations (Kanal 77 and RFM).

A specific feature of these elections was the lack of information about the mayoral candidates in Plasnica, as a result of their decision, and not because of the media. The monitoring showed that the mayoral candidates for Plasnica had not even used the right to free political representation on the Public Broadcaster's channel. Regarding the campaign conducted in Shtip, it was noted that during the campaign period, many government officials had paid visits to the Eastern region and that their activities were reflected in the regional media news reporting and/or in the special information shows. In this, some of them openly expressed support to the SDSM's mayoral candidate for Shtip. The regional television stations aired more special news programmes, which was to be expected bearing in mind that elections were held in only two municipalities.

Generally speaking, the media analyzed did achieve balanced reporting. An exception to this was Iris TV, on which the

predominant candidate, with more than half of the total airtime dedicated to reporting on the elections, was the candidate of SDSM. In this way, Iris TV failed to ensure balanced coverage of the election campaign in accordance with the principle of equality of all candidates. Due to this violation of the Electoral Code, at its 46th session, the Agency Council initiated a misdemeanour procedure against this medium.

Out of 13 broadcasters registered with the SEC, a total of 8 broadcasted PPA, of which 7 were TV channels, and 1 was a radio station. During the election campaign, no violation of the rules for broadcasting paid political advertising was found with any of the media outlets. The two regional television stations, Star TV and M-Net HD TV, had most rented airtime, during which they aired the advertising clips of the candidates for Shtip mayor. The data contained in the Report were also checked through the procedure of confirmation of the reports for realized services submitted by the broadcasters.

The broadcaster monitoring reports are available at the following links:

Report on monitoring media coverage of the 2020 Early Mayoral Elections in Plasnica and Shtip Municipalities

Report on the Paid Political Advertising Aired by the Broadcasters