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**Gender in the 2020 Election Campaign:**

**Analysis of Gender Issues and the Manner of Representing and Portraying Women and Men in the National Television Stations’**

**Coverage of the Elections**

**- *SUMMARY* -**

The research ***"Gender in the 2020 Election Campaign: Analysis of Gender Issues and the Manner of Representing and Portraying Women and Men in the National Television Stations’ Coverage of the Elections***”, was prepared for the needs of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services by a team from the *Societas Civilis* Institute for Democracy Skopje (IDSCS), during the autumn of 2020. The data presented had been obtained through an analysis of the media content related to the Early Parliamentary Elections conducted in the Republic of North Macedonia on 15 July 2020.

The entire research is available in Macedonian both in print and electronically, under a separate banner on the Agency's website, titled "Gender and the Media" (https://avmu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Finalna-analiza-na-rodovi-prasanja-v.6-final-so-korica.pdf). This summary has been prepared with the aim of communicating the most relevant findings to the general public more easily.

**Methodology**

The sample of analyzed television services includes both public (MRT1 and MRT2) and private television stations (Alsat-M, Alfa, Kanal 5, Sitel and Telma), some of which broadcast programme in Macedonian (MRT1, Alfa, Kanal 5, Sitel and Telma) , while others - (also) in Albanian (MRT2 and Alsat-M). The entire sample consists of a total of 2,056 media content items broadcasted during the election campaign (in the period from 24.06 to 12.07.2020), and was divided into sub-samples that covered different types of television content, as follows: 1) items aired in the daily news programmes (N = 1381); 2) interviews (N=76); 3) debate shows (N=38); 4) paid political advertising (PPA) in the form of individual video clips (N=764); and 5) paid political advertising in the form of individual video clips containing footage of rallies by political entities or other party events that were part of the ongoing campaign (N=26).

The structure of the sample was determined by the editorial policies of the television stations and provides important indicators about the way in which each of these had decided to inform its viewers about the election process. The number itself of media contents analyzed and their distribution throughout the entire election campaign was suitable for making an assessment of the treatment of gender issues during the election campaign in the Macedonian public sphere. The data analysis was both quantitative and qualitative, aimed at using these comprehensively.

The contents in all samples were analyzed from the aspects of both visualization and sexualization, objectification, stereotyping and discrimination. With visualization, it was measured whether the content under analysis included footage outside of the studio and, if so, how many men and women there were and how they were depicted. In terms of sexualization, objectification, stereotyping and discrimination, the measurements were made according to what was going on inside the studio (the way women and men were portrayed - their roles, the questions posed and the answers they gave, the topics and the duration of speech, etc.). Analyzing these variables was especially important in the case of newscasts, PPA video spots, and PPA footage of events.

**General findings**

According to the quantitative analysis, a few of the general findings indicate that the gender-related issues had been rather underrepresented during the 2020 election campaign. In general, men were more represented in the media space, both in terms of the duration of their speeches and of their presence as representatives of political entities. Sexual objectification was rarely present in the contents analyzed, yet stereotypical expressions and representations were present. Generally speaking, based on the data extracted from all contents, women were less represented.

In terms of content, the daily news programmes were the only programme content in which women were presented on all TV channels, yet much less than men were. While women spoke for a total of 8,548 seconds (14.5%), men were given the floor as active speakers for as much as 50,491 seconds (85.5%).

As regards the interviews, MRT2 and Alsat-M TV had no female guests at all, while Sitel TV did not air interviews as separate shows. With the other media outlets, women were included in significantly smaller numbers than men again. As active speakers, they were given 28,188 seconds (17.4%) of the total content monitored, whereas men spoke for a total of 133,590 seconds (82.6%).

Alfa TV and Sitel TV did not air debate shows at all. In the case of MRT1, MRT2, Alsat-M TV, Kanal 5 TV and Telma TV, women were less involved as active speakers. In total, they were active in the debates for 21,795 seconds (16.2%), while men were included with a total of 112,786 seconds (83.8%).

Women were less represented as active speakers in both paid political advertisements and in PPA involving footage of political parties’ events aired by the commercial television channels (the Public Broadcasting Service must not broadcast PPA). The only instance where it could be noticed that women were represented longer than men, was the PPA including footage of events aired by Alpha TV, but this fact is negligible because the difference was only 30 seconds, particularly if compared to the data about the duration of the PPA spots, as content similar in nature. In the paid political ads, women were represented as active speakers for only 5,180 seconds (22.9%), while men - for 17,459 seconds (77.1%). In PPA including footage of political parties’ events, men were given 1,038 seconds to speak (85.6%), while women were given only 175 seconds (14.4%).

Looking into the television stations’ and the contents they had aired individually, one can notice again that the duration of women's speech, i.e. the airtime allotted to women as active entities during the election campaign was much shorter than that allotted to meen. The shortest representation or participation of women was that by MRT2 (3%) and Alsat-M TV (7%), wheras the longest were the representations on Telma TV, Kanal 5 TV and Sitel TV, with 23% each, followed by MRT1 and Alfa TV, with 21% each. In total, women appeared as speakers for a total of 63,369 seconds, or only 17% of the total content analyzed, whereas men occupied 83% of the airtime, or a total of 312,593 seconds.

The participation of women in the various contents aired by the television channels was also analyzed according to the capacity in which they had been invited, and this revealed a low level of participation of women in the media during the election campaign. What is important to note is that, in the contents analyzed, women were included the least in their capacity as representatives of political parties, experts and analysts, and their number as candidates was also low compared to their male counterparts. There were 996 appearances of male MP candidates in the television contents, as opposed to the 211 appearances of female candidates. They were the least represented on MRT2 (10), Alsat-M TV (15) and MRT1 (19) – which is a cause for concern, given the important role of the Public Broadcaster in ensuring broader representation of each group in society. Included in the television contents in their capacity as holders of public offices were only 94 women, as opposed to 325 men. The female holders of public offices were the least represented on MRT1 (6) and MRT2 (5), which again sends out a worrisome message considering the important role of the Public Broadcasting Service. Only 12 women were included in their capacity as representatives of political parties, compared to 220 men, revealing a rather drastic difference. Women were consistently less included as representatives of political parties by all monitored television channels. There were a total of 9 women represented in their capacity as experts, where MRT2, Kanal 5 TV, Sitel TV and Telma TV did not have any female experts represented at all. Female analysts, on the other hand, were absent from MRT1, MRT2 and Sitel TV, whereas the other media outlets included only 4 female analysts in their programmes. Women, compared to men, were less involved as citizens expressing their viewpoints, and were not included at all in the category of public figures.

**Conclusions**

The analysis has highlighted several practices that are being followed by different media outlets and can be found in different types of content:

• The media coverage of the election campaign for the Parliamentary Elections in July 2020, markedly leaned towards promoting the male MP candidates and the male perspective and expertise on the developments relating to the elections.

• The female candidates were overshadowed by their male counterparts, had less access to the various forms of promotion for their platforms and their profiles and messages remained anonymous, i.e. unheard and unseen by the public.

• The dominance of men, who appeared in their roles as experts, analysts, or other types of speakers on election-related topics, further supports the stereotypical perception of the public that politics is a "male profession."

• Generally speaking, men prevailed in all types of media content. This conclusion refers to the male dominance in visualization, but also in relation to the number of men as direct speakers and the duration of their portrayal and presentation.

• Gender-related issues were on the sidelines of the campaigns of the political entities. Their presence in the media promotion of the political programmes was negligible, while, where these issues were mentioned, they were generalized, without concretely stating the mechanisms and tools for achieving gender equality.

• Due to the generally low participation of women in the daily news programmes, debates and interviews, as well as in the PPA videos and PPA including footage of events involving participants in the campaign, their views were significantly less represented on all topics. If we sort the topics according to the frequency of their occurrence, women mostly talked about: elections/the course of the campaign, economy, judiciary, healthcare, corruption, finance, foreign policy and education, while and men mostly talked about: elections/course of the campaign, economy, healthcare, judiciary, foreign policy, finance, corruption and education. As can be seen, there is no stereotypical division in terms of the topics most often discussed by women and men, but the number of women who spoke on any of these topics was manyfold smaller than the number of men. These data show a discrepancy between the topics most often talked about by women during the election campaign and the fact that in Parliament, they are most often included in those bodies that address as their area of ​​activity the sphere of everyday life – education, culture, social policy and equal opportunities for women and men.

• Stereotypical gender roles in society were also reflected in the media coverage of the election campaign.

• Gender stereotyping was most often present in paid political advertisements. It could be spotted in relation to the social roles of women and men, especially in the segment of ​​family care, courage and heroism and professions.

• This setup of media coverage of the election campaign largely follows the gender (dis) balance in media reporting around the world in general.

**Recommendations**

The role of the media as the fourth pillar of democracy plays one of the key roles in promoting gender equality. Their role is essential for achieving a more substantial participation and representation of women in politics, especially because of the importance that their voice be heard and reinforced during the election campaign. In order to improve and promote this role of the media, it is necessary that they take up several measures:

• Review the reporting practices in relation to political elections. It is necessary to introduce the gender perspective in all kinds of programme, and this ensure equal representation, both for the female and male candidates for political office, as well as for the female and male viewpoints regarding issues related to the elections;

• Sensitize media workers about gender in order to introduce the practice of journalistic reporting through the prism of gender-related issues, regularly cover topics related to gender issues and ensure gender balance among their guests, i.e. the interlocutors in their shows;

• Sensitize the male and female editors of the media and the news programmes about gender, so as to increase the likelihood of producing media items that are presented from the gender-related point-of view;

The research offers several recommendations to the participants in the elections as well:

• To ensure gender-related sensitization of the political parties with the aim of achieving greater and more active involvement of women in their political campaigns (especially female candidates for political office) and a more active and substantial dedication to gender-related issues;

• To encourage and enhance the capacities of female politicians for their inclusion into all spheres of governance in the state through greater inclusion in the media space by both the media and the political parties;

• To carefully conceptualize the contents of paid political advertising, created by the political entities, in order to prevent media from promoting stereotypical contents or visualization.