**LOCAL ELECTIONS 2021**

**Agency Publishes Second Report on Monitoring Media Coverage Before the Start of the Election Campaign**

On 1 October 2021, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services published the second report on monitoring media coverage of the Local Elections for the period before the start of the election campaign (from 1 until 26 September 2021). The report covered the 24-hour programme of MRT1 and six commercial television channes at the state level –24 Vesti TV, Alsat-M TV, Alfa TV, Kanal 5 TV, Sitel TV and Telma TV. The monitoring results showed that, during this period, there had been no violations of the provisions of the Electoral Code. In the pre-election period, MRT1 did not hold any debate face-offs of participants in the election process, which it as the Public Broadcasting Service is obliged to organize in line with Article 76-a, Paragraph 11, of the Electoral Code. MRT1 and 24 Vesti TV were the only ones to have fulfilled the obligation to provide coverage in the sign language for the hearing impaired.

The fatal fire at the modular Healthcare Center for Covid patients in Tetovo was the topic that pushed all current, domestic political and social issues to the background, ever since that tragic September-8th day on. An increasing number of editorial crews decided to fill in the pre-election period with interviews and media portrayals of mayoral candidates, placing the accent on the twelve party and independent candidates for Skopje Mayor. Much of the media content was preoccupied with the decades-long inter-party rivalry, quite often personalized as a clash of party leaders, so the journalistic dwelling of this unconstructive politicization of all social spheres relativized, i.e. made ambiguous, even the content of news and reports. The individual reports on the national programme services that were monitored are included in the Second Report on Monitoring Media Coverage of the Local Elections, available at this [link](https://avmu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/%D0%92%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80-%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%98-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B1%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%B5-1-26-%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BF%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B8-2021-%D0%B3.-%D1%84%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BD.docx).

**Press Releases**

On 7 October 2021, the Agency informed in a Press Release that, while monitoring the media coverage of the elections, it had found that several television stations had been broadcasting paid political advertising involving minors. In the Press Release, it underlined that, according to the Electoral Code, the participants in the election campaign were responsible for the content of their ads, announcements, advertisements, and other recorded materials they had ordered, but that broadcasters bore responsibility as well, considering Article 76, Paragraph 3, of the Electoral Code, which clearly stipulates that participation of minors in paid political advertising is prohibited.

The Agency reminded the broadcasters via Press Releases during both election rounds that, according to the Electoral Code, the results of the public opinion polls related to the 2021 Local Elections could be published no later than five days before the Election Day, i.e. no later than 24:00 hrs on 11 October for the first round, and until midnight on 25 October – for the second round. The Press Releases also pointed out that, when publishing the results of public opinion polls related to the participants in the electoral process, media were obliged to provide data on the name of the client who had ordered and paid for the poll, the institution that had conducted the poll, the methodology applied, the size and structure of the sample examined sample and the period during which the poll had been conducted. The results of public opinion polls conducted on the Election Day must not be published before polling stations close.

In both election rounds, the Agency informed the broadcasters via Press Releases that, starting from 16 October, until 19:00 hrs on 17 October for the first round of elections, and from 30 October until 19:00 hrs on 31 October 2021 for the second election round, the pre-election silence rules would apply. The Press Releases emphasized that, during the silence, media outlets should continue to report on the electoral process, however all forms of electoral media presentation of the participants in the election campaign should be put to a halt.

**Agency Publishes the Report on Media Coverage of the First Round of 2021 Local Election Campaign**

On 25 October 2021, the Agency published the Report on the broadcasters’ manner of reporting during the first round of the election campaign (from 27 September until 15 October 2021). The monitoring covered a total of 13 programme services: the national commercial television channels of Alsat-M, Alfa, Kanal 5, Sitel, Telma, 24 Vesti, 21-M, Shenja and Klan Macedonia, and the programme channels of the Public Broadcaster – MRT1, MRT2, the Parliamentary Channel and the First Programme of the Macedonian Radio. The monitoring findings indicated no violations against the provisions of the Electoral Code.

All commercial national-level services made efforts to provide media coverage of the election campaign and nearly all reserved a number of special information programmes for the participants in the elections, apart from reporting in the daily news programmes. The campaign was not covered in accordance with the principles of equality in the case of the mayoral candidates, or proportionality in the case of the municipal council candidates.

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The news desks followed the election campaign in a pragmatic fashion, mostly in tune with the expectations based on the general political experience gathered from the previous election processes, giving priority to SDSM and VMRO/DPMNE and their coalition partners, and not in tune with the starting principles of the stated legal requirements. However, there were many objective reasons for such a conclusion, in this case starting from the basic one – the enormous number of verified candidates for Skopje City, for the Skopje municipalities separately, and also for all other municipalities in the country.

The Public Broadcasting Service observed the legal requirements concerning the structure of daily news programmes, the broadcasting of debates and the free political presentation. The Parliamentary Channel aired free political presentation of a number of participants in the elections, scheduling the airtime in accordance with the relevant legal provision. The only ones to provide reporting for people with sensory disabilities were MRT 1 and TV 24 Vesti. The Report on the broadcasters’ manner of reporting during the election campaign (the period from 27 September until 15 October 2021) is available at this [link.](ИЗВЕШТАЈ%20-%20ЛОКАЛНИ%20ИЗБОРИ%202021%20ГОДИНА%20ПРВ%20КРУГфинален.docx)

All materials related to the monitoring of media coverage of the local elections are available on our website [www.avmu.mk](http://www.avmu.mk), under the separate banner titled “Elections 2021”.

**Press Releases – Condemnation of Attacks Directed at Journalists**

On 18 October, the Agency condemned the unprofessional attitude of the President of the State Election Commission towards the journalists during the afternoon press conference of the SEC held on the Election Day, and emphasized that the holders of public offices should possess awareness about the publicly expressed word and should show the highest level of respect for the journalistic profession. At the same time, it condemned the attacks on the journalist crews and the obstruction of their work by certain supporters of political parties.

On 19 October, the Agency condemned the publicly expressed insults by the independent candidate for Kichevo Mayor, Fatmir Limani, addressed to a journalist of 21 TV during her reporting on the local elections. The Press Release underliend the extreme extremely importance of enabling journalists to perform their professional tasks smoothly and safely in order to provide the public with timely and accurate information. Instead of defamations and insults, one should show respect for the journalistic profession and the dignity of media workers.

On 22 October, the Agency condemned the attempt by the mayoral candidate of the Alliance for Albanians party in Tetovo, Vulnet Murseli, to discredit a journalist of the Klan national television channel, as well as the unbecoming attitude of Foreign Minister Bujar Osmani towards a journalist of the same television station. It was pointed out that all, politicians and holders of public office in particular, should be aware of the responsibility they bear about their publicly expressed words and their behavior towards media workers whose main role is to inform the public. Any attempt at discrediting and tarnishing the reputation of journalists violates the principles of the rule of law and undermines freedom of information.

**Data on Radio Stations’ Reach and TV Stations’ Share in the Total Viewership – Q3 2021**

A survey of the radio stations’ reach and television stations’ share in the total viewership in the third quarter of 2021 was prepared for the needs of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services.

The respective data were obtained from public opinion polls and refer to: the average daily and weekly reach of the radio stations’ listenership and television stations’ viewership; the period of the day during which the respondents were listening to the radio/watching television; the type of programme content the respondents had been listening to on the radio/watching on television the day before; the share in the total viewership for the previous day, including the share in the viewership on the territory where each television station had been broadcasting programme and share in the total viewership; the average daily and weekly reach of the foreign television channels, etc.

The data on radio stations’ reach and TV stations’ share in the total viewership during the third quarter of 2021, can be downloaded at the following [link](https://avmu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/%D0%9F%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%86%D0%B8-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%B4%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%B3%D0%BE%D1%82-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%A0%D0%90-%D0%B8-%D1%83%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%BE%D1%82-%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%B2%D0%BA%D1%83%D0%BF%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%B3%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%A2%D0%92-%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B8-%D0%B7%D0%B0-III-%D0%BA%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BB_15102021_1-1.pdf)

**Supervisions over Broadcasters, Print Media Publishers and Operators of Public Electronic Communication Networks**

**Broadcasters**

As regards the observance of obligations under the Rulebook on Minimum Technical, Spatial, Financial and Staffing Requirements for obtaining a radio or television broadcasting license, *ad hoc* administrative supervisions were performed over Tajm Radio, Eko Radio, Kometa 2000 Radio, B-97 Radio, Radio 7, Radio Aracina, Zdravkin Televizija and Siti Televizija. The supervision detected no violations.

After receiving a complaint from a natural person, an *ad hoc* programme supervision was performed over Sitel TV concerning its observance of the obligations to protect juvenile audience. The supervision found that the broadcaster had acted in accordance with the legal obligation arising from Article 50, Paragraph 3, of the LAAVMS.

Control programme supervision was performed over KTV Televizija from Kavadarci and EDO TV from Skopje, to determine whether these broadcasters had acted upon the public warning measures imposed due to violation of the rules for broadcasting audiovisual commercial communications – new advertising techniques. The supervision showed that these broadcasters had fully complied with the decisions for imposing public warning measures.

**Print Media Publishers**

The Agency conducted regular administrative supervision over 20 print media publishers, in order to determine whether they had published data such as the name and address of the headquarters and the editorial offices of their print media outlets, data on the responsible person, editors, printing house, date of printing or reprinting and circulation, in accordance with the obligation arising from the Law on Media. The supervision found no violations.

**Operators of Public Electronic Communication Networks**

Regular programme supervision over the fulfillment of obligations concerning the registration of programme services with the Agency and subtitling of the programmes retransmitted by the operators, was performed on the following operators: IP Systems, Inel International, Kanal 16, AS KTV and Total TV. The supervision concluded that these operators had acted in accordance with the legal obligations.

As regards the obligation of the operators of PECNs that retransmit programme services to provide, free-of-charge and as part of their programme packages, the programme services of the public broadcasting service, regular programme supervision was performed on the operators Neotel, Globalsat, Nafi and Beko, DrimDPrim Trade, Inel International, Infel CTV and Kabel-Net. The supervision concluded that all of the above operators had met this obligation.





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