[RU] New Election and Referendum Act

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The new version of the Act containing important amendments to the previous Election and Referendum Act was published on 6 April 1999 and has entered into force. Five of the 48 paragraphs of the Act are concerned with amendments to current provisions regulating mass-media coverage of election campaigns. Among the most significant provisions of the Election Act (including its amended version) are the following:

- once a complete list of election candidates has been drawn up, all candidates and parties on that list are equally entitled to election advertising in the mass media;

- all state broadcasting companies and other broadcasters which receive funding from the federal or regional state budget and broadcast in places where elections are being held, are obliged to offer, free of charge, to all official candidates and parties a certain amount of air-time for election advertising, together with the possibility of purchasing additional air-time for election advertising. The cost of additional air-time should be the same for all candidates and parties.

- air-time offered free of charge to all candidates and parties for the purposes of election advertising should total one hour per weekday on each national station during federal elections and 30 minutes on each regional channel during federal or regional elections. Stations which broadcast for less than 2 hours per day should devote at least one quarter of that time to election advertising. At least as much additional air-time should be available for sale to candidates and parties for election advertising as is offered free of charge. Election advertising should be broadcast during peak viewing hours. The most important new regulations include the following:

- the amended Act stipulates that any broadcasting company which receives at least 15 % of its total annual budget from state funding is obliged to offer free air-time for election advertising;

- broadcasting companies which receive various tax benefits (more than 85 % of all Russian broadcasters) or which have not received any funding from the federal or regional state budget for more than a year prior to the elections, are exempt from the obligation to offer free air-time for election advertising;

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- broadcasting companies must give equal prominence in their news broadcasts to all candidates and parties.

Federal□nyj Zakon „O vnesenii izmenenij i dopolnenij v Federal□nyj zakon «Ob osnovnych garantijach izbiratel□nych prav i prava na utschastie v referendume grazhdan Rossijskoj Federazii». Rossijskaja gaseta, 6 April 1999.

Federal law on amendments and additions to the federal law on the basic guarantees of election law and the participation rights in referenda of citizens of the Russian Federation, No.55-FZ of 30 March 1999. Officially published on 6 April 1999 in the newspaper Rossijskaja gaseta.

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