[BA] Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina Partly Agrees to Broadcasters' Requests

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The Association of Electronic Media of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AEM BiH), the association of private/commercial broadcasters, called upon the country's 150 radio and television stations to interrupt transmission for one minute on 10 July 2002, in response to the new Election Rules for 5 October Elections, which AEM claims if applied would cost them millions of Konvertible Marks (KM) in lost advertising revenue. Namely, according to Chapter 16, Media, Article 16.1 of the BiH Election Law passed by the BiH Parliament, "During the sixty (60) days prior to election day, for the competent authorities at all levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina, broadcast media shall equitably and fairly present in the media political parties, coalitions, lists of independent candidates and independent candidates and provide information about the issues related to the campaign and the electoral process.

Competent authorities at all levels shall ensure impartiality in their relations with the media during the electoral campaign."

In addition (Article 16.3), reads: "All broadcast media shall broadcast statements and information by the Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina free of charge for the purpose of informing voters about all aspects of the electoral process as set forth by the Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina". (See: Offical Gazette of BiH, No. 9/2002, published in May this year).

However, the Election Commission of BiH, following strong pressure from the entire media sector in the country, partly changed the rules pertaining to the obligation placed on broadcasters in the pre-election campaign for the upcoming elections.

According to the adopted changes, commercial/private broadcasters are not obliged to broadcast spots of political subjects, but if they do broadcast even one single spot, they must broadcast the spots of all requesting political parties.

The Election Commission of BiH also adopted a change regarding political debates, i.e., the 60 days period for broadcasting political debates has been reduced to 30 days before the election.

Decision of the Election Commission of BiH, July 2002

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