[RU] Changes in Election Law Concern Broadcast Media

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The Federal Statute "On basic guarantees of electoral rights and the right to participate in a referendum of the citizens of the Russian Federation" entered into force on 22 July 2002 (see also IRIS 1999-6: 10). This Act serves as the basis for the whole system of election law in Russia.

The act distinguishes between two kinds of information. The first one is election propaganda, which can be disseminated only by candidates and parties. The second one is information on the course of campaigns, which the mass media can disseminate.

The Act introduced a list of actions considered as election propaganda if carried out during a campaign period. Among them are appeals to vote for or against a candidate or a party, distribution of information with an obvious prevalence of information about a candidate, party, election block in combination with any comments, expressions of preference concerning somebody from among the candidates, parties, election blocks, description of the possible consequences of the election of a candidate or party, etc.

The Act uses such vague statements as formation of a positive or a negative attitude of voters toward the candidate or the party as a kind of election propaganda. The list of such actions is open-ended and states that any actions, aimed to induce or inducing voters to vote for a candidate or party or against them may be declared as election propaganda. Journalists are not allowed to carry out any of the listed actions.

Election propaganda on TV broadcasting channels begins 30 days prior to voting day.

The all-Russian and regional state-owned TV broadcasting organisations are obliged to provide free air time to the candidates, parties and election blocks at elections to the federal bodies of state power. The regional stateowned TV broadcasting organisations are obliged to provide free airtime to the candidates, parties and election blocks at elections to bodies of the state power of the subjects (regions) of the Russian Federation. The municipal-owned TV broadcasting organisations are obliged to provide free airtime to the candidates, parties and election blocks at elections to institutions of local self-government.

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Not less than half of the total amount of free airtime (previously it was only one third) shall be provided to the candidates, parties and election blocks for a joint use of it in the form of debates or roundtables only.

The state-owned and municipal-owned broadcasting organisations are obliged to reserve airtime to be provided for payment. The amount and conditions of payment should be uniform for all candidates, parties and election blocks. The total amount of reserved airtime for money shall be equal or exceed (but no more than twice) the established total length of the free airtime.

In regard to results of public opinion polls the Act prohibits its distribution in the mass media or Internet during the last five days before the voting day. Previously this term was of three days.

Federalniy zakon "Ob osnovnikh garantiyakh izbiratelnikh prav i prava na uchastie v referendume grazhdan Rossiyskoi Federatsii", #67-FZ, 12 June 2002, Rossiyskaya gazeta, 15 June 2002

http://www.rg.ru/oficial/doc/federal_zak/67-fz_con.shtm

The Federal Act On basic guarantees of electoral rights and the right to participate in a referendum of the citizens of the Russian Federation, #67-FZ of 12 June 2002, Rossiyskaya gazeta, 15 June 2002

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