[BG] Opinion of the Council for Electronic Media Regarding the Media Coverage of the 2007 Local Elections Campaign

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On 11 September 2007, the Council for Electronic Media (CEM), in accordance with its powers pursuant to Art. 33 item 3 of the *Закон за радиото и телевизията* (Radio and Television Act - *Zakon za Radioto i Televiziata* - see IRIS 2002-2: 3), adopted recommendations for fair, balanced and impartial media coverage of the 2007 local elections in Bulgaria (see IRIS 2007-9: 7). The CEM opinion is intended to create a favourable working environment in which the election campaign is covered by television and radio operators, and to ensure the observance of the universal, equal and direct right to vote of all eligible Bulgarian citizens.

According to the opinion of the CEM the major principles that shall be observed during media coverage of the 2007 local elections campaign are as follows:

1. The principle of political pluralism regarding the sharing of opinions in the programmes of public and commercial radio and television operators.

2. The independence of editors in the programmes of public and commercial operators shall be in compliance with the effective regulatory framework.

3. The election chronicles (discussions, interviews, political debates), which shall be clearly indicated in the programmes of public and commercial radio and television operators, shall be separated from the news and the commentary/discussion programmes by using audiovisual means.

4. The programmes of the public and commercial operators shall be balanced in terms of possible influence on the public vote.

5. There shall be no privileges for state and municipal authorities during the election coverage.

6. The right of reply shall be observed during the entire election period (pursuant to Art. 18 of the Radio and Television Act).

7. The public and commercial operators shall allocate time for the broadcast of paid political messages of all political parties, coalitions and independent

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candidates under equal terms and conditions.

8. The provisions of the Act governing time restrictions on advertising shall be observed.

9. The operators shall allocate time to inform their audiences about the results of election surveys providing information on the methodology used by the respective sociological agency, the time period of the survey, the coverage of the survey and the possible margin of error in the survey.

10. The operators shall not announce any statistical data about the results of the elections on Election Day, before the Central Election Commission has declared the official end of the Election Day.

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