[MT] Scheme of Local Council Election Broadcasts

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The Broadcasting Authority has launched a scheme for local council election broadcasts. Although local councils have been established in Malta since 1993, this is the first time in the history of political broadcasting that the Broadcasting Authority is organising a political broadcasting scheme for local councils. In the past, local council election broadcasts used to form part of the scheme of political broadcasts that would normally be running during the year including during the campaign period for local council elections.

The new round of local council elections was held on Saturday 10 March 2012. Launched less than a month before polling day, the scheme consisted of three debates and 150 minutes of political spots and party productions. These were in turn sub-divided as follows: one debate was assigned to the Labour Party, one debate was assigned to the Nationalist Party and one debate was assigned to Alternattiva Demokratika - The Green Party. The Labour Party is the party in opposition; the Nationalist Party is the party in Government; and the Green Party does not have any representation in Malta's unicameral House of Representatives. In all three debates, the Nationalist Party and Labour Party were both entitled to two speakers, while the Green Party was entitled to one speaker. The Green Party normally polls between 1% and 2% of the electorate in general elections.

In so far as political party productions and political spots are concerned, the Nationalist Party and the Labour Party were each entitled to 60 minutes while the Green Party was allocated thirty minutes. Each production could not be less than 30 seconds but not longer than five minutes. All three debates were broadcast on the public service broadcaster's national television station - TVM - and on its radio station - Radio Malta. The debates' chairpersons were been chosen by the Broadcasting Authority and the speakers by the political parties.

Although these elections were limited to local council elections, it must be noted that half of Malta has been called on to express its vote during these elections. So these elections can be considered as a testing ground for the general elections that are due to be held at the latest by August 2013. Moreover in Malta, it is the Broadcasting Authority and not the public service broadcaster that approves the scheme of political broadcasts and also organises it.. The public service broadcaster comes into the picture only as the carrier of these broadcasts. Such broadcasts have been organised by the Authority right from its inception way

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back in 1961. Such broadcasts ensure that all political parties contesting an election are given ample opportunity to put forward to the viewer and listener their views and electoral manifesto for local council elections.

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