

[MK] New methodology for media monitoring during elections

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*Borce Manevski
Independent Media Consultant*

Based on the newly amended Electoral Code - Article 76-c (Изборен законик), the media regulation authority, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, developed a methodology to monitor media election coverage on the radio and television programme services (Методологија за мониторинг на изборното медиумско претставување преку радио и телевизиските програмски сервиси за време на изборните процеси).

The EU Senior Expert Group, led by Reinhard Priebe, who was tasked to pinpoint the systemic rule of law issues, noted in June 2015 that there was “an unhealthy relationship between the mainstream media and top government officials, with the former seemingly taking direct orders from the latter on both basic and fundamental issues of editorial policy. This practice harms the public's right to receive information from a variety of sources and expressing a variety of views, and reduces the scope for objective and balanced reporting of facts.” The aim of the Methodology is to detect if the media will report in a balanced and professional manner during the forthcoming early elections, which are expected to take place in April 2016, which in return should result in the creation of a pluralistic media landscape.

The methodological approach is based on the provisions from the Electoral Code, as well as on the Media Law and on the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services. The Methodology defines the monitoring activities, which the media regulation authority will undertake depending on the stage of the electoral process which it divides into three phases. The first phase is the time period prior to the start of the election campaign. In this phase the TV and radio programme services will be monitored, and if there are indications of possible violations, the respective content will be further analysed. The second phase includes the first and second election rounds. In this phase the broadcast content will be analysed according to qualitative and quantitative indicators, including discursive analysis, when needed (tone of the reporting, story framing, etc.). The third phase is the silence period: the programmes will be monitored and analysed, in order to determine if a certain broadcast content violates the regulations.

However, the Electoral Code sets an obligation for the media regulation authority also to monitor the informative websites (the Electoral Code uses the term electronic media [internet portals]), the media regulator issued on its webpage an

official standpoint of the Agency, in which it informed the public that it will not monitor the news websites, because there was no definition of 'internet portal' or explanation of the scope of this term. The decision of the media regulation authority not to implement the electoral legislation to its full extent may have an impact on the overall elections and may add fuel to the already explosive political crisis.

Предлог закон за изменување и дополнување на Изборниот законик, по скратена постапка

<http://sobranie.mk/materialdetails.nsp?materialId=0dee4b70-8070-446f-980d-dcc76ee0a34d>

The Law on Amending the Electoral Code

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Recommendations of the Senior Experts' Group on systemic Rule of Law issues relating to the communications interception revealed in Spring 2015

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/news_corner/news/news-files/20150619_recommendations_of_the_senior_experts_group.pdf

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