# [BG] Report of the media regulatory authority on the pre-election campaign

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The report of the Council for Electronic Media (CEM) represents the data and findings based on the specialised monitoring of the activity of media service providers during the pre-election campaign for the selection of Members of Parliament spanning the period from 24 February to 26 March 2017. On 21 February 2017, the Central Election Commission and the Council for the Electronic Media concluded an agreement on the principles and parameters of the specialised monitoring. The main purpose of the monitoring process was to establish the way in which the electronic media reflects the political subjects covered during the pre-election campaign; these media, by means of their public influence and specific forms of expression, give their audience the opportunity and the right to make its choice. The monitoring considered the paying and free forms of propaganda using two parameters - the number (frequency) and duration (seconds) of the candidates' appearances in the media. Paying and free political propaganda was examined in detail - by the number of information units, the duration, and the presence of the candidates on air.

The main criteria used for the evaluation of the content in compliance with the pre-election campaign were:

1. Transparency: the opportunity for society to form an opinion based on the value of the information, ideas and opinions distributed by the media.

2. The candidates' accessibility to media appearances - the transparency of negotiations and funding; the designation of paying propaganda; the opportunities for free participation; the participation for free media; media contents without limits: the attention given to voters with specific needsand adequate information for first-time voters.

3. Professional principles and standards to allow the audience to make an informed choice: objectivity, efficiency, the balanced representation of different platforms and messages through the regulated paying political advertising and provision of free broadcasting.

4. Tolerance: the non-admissibility of hostile speech, insults, slander or compromising speech.

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5. The presentation of political diversity, media variety and innovative forms.

6. Political positioning in entertainment formats.

The monitoring of the pre-election campaign (24 February to 26 March 2017) ascertained active pre-election manifestations, as reflected by the electronic media. It is obvious that the pre-election campaign in the electronic media is much more active than the previous pre-election campaigns, monitored by the CEM. There is a trend towards more direct confrontation among the candidates for election in the form of discussion rounds. The debates, as the most attractive form for the audience, gained importance and interest among viewers in this campaign just because of media imitativeness. In a large number of debates, however, the monitoring registered repetition of the topics; thus, the focus, important for the viewers, was unbalanced and namely geared towards enabling the candidates standing for election as Members of Parliament to provide solutions to the listed issues. The trend that political rhetoric shall find its place in the discussion forms as being the most attractive for the viewers was preserved. The monitoring considered that the disputes could not be distinguished from the perspective of the contents and also analytically. The tone among the participants in the political contest became tense and the monitoring linked it to the end of the campaign.

The paying political advertisement, especially in the form of videos, became extremely intensive in the week prior to the vote. The monitoring registered as a positive element the fact that free political participation was predominant in the pre-election media content; its domination over paying political advertisements, influenced by the parties' headquarters, favoured journalistic reflection and activity. The media expressed an active critical position on the controlled and "corporate" vote; many of them developed the topic in detail and backed it up with specific cases in their investigations, reports and interviews.

For the first time, the CEM followed the participation of men and women during the pre-election campaign. As regards the appearance of the participants in the media, the monitoring ascertained the significantly higher participation of men; the imbalance in terms of percentage ratio is 80 to 20 in favour of men.

For the first time, the CEM ascertained significant violations of the election and media legislation, regardless of the active media campaign. The violations based on the information provided by the CEM and sanctioned by the Central Election Commission focused on good morals, the undesignated paying forms of propaganda, and the distribution of sociological studies without the necessary requisites. In this campaign, there were no cases in which language of hatred and discrimination was used.

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