

REPORT

**BASED ON THE MONITORING OF ELECTION
CAMPAIGN COVERAGE IN TV NEWS**

INSTITUTE OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES



TIME FRAME: NOVEMBER 21 - 29 2016



GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

2

1. TOPICS COVERED BY THE MEDIA

The topics covered by elections, the election campaign, the separate topics coming from it, the organization and monitoring of the elections and the party rating polls were prevalent in the central news of all media during the monitored period. In the central informative programmes of some TV stations, such as Sitel (80 reports), TV Nova (73), Kanal 5 (96), and MTV1 (96), the coverage of party activities in the campaign (reports from rallies and meetings with citizens) reached up to three quarters of the total number of published reports that referred to political actors, processes and states.

Most media paid special attention to the topic of state bilingualism, which was imposed during the campaign, however all of them analysed it from a different angle and framed it differently. Some TV stations (24 Vesti) confronted the opinions of political entities and raised the issue of whether this topic is realistic or fictional, other, on the other hand (Alsat M) particularly followed opinions on this matter from Albanian parties,

criticizing them for not having solved this issue so far, and others (Alfa, Sitel, Kanal 5, TV Nova) represented the thesis that the solutions for use of languages announced by the oppositional party SDSM are an introduction to federalization, a hazard to safety, even a disintegration of the state, which is in line with the campaign of the ruling party VMRO DPMNE.

From other topics brought about in the pre-election period, not related to the elections, what stood out was the monitoring of the work of the Special Public Prosecutor's Office, i.e. the court process 'Fortress' of SPPO. This topic was presented on 24 Vesti (15), Telma (11), TV 21 (10) and on Alsat M (27), who also reported on the obstacles for SPPO to take over the case 'Sopot'.

Out of the topics that were not linked to the elections, with TV stations Sitel, TV Nova, Alfa, Kanal 5 and MTV1 the most common ones were reports that referred to the regular activities of state officials (the visit of President Gjorge Ivanov to Bulgaria, etc.).

2. POLITICAL PLURALISM IN THE OVERALL REPORTING ON DOMESTIC EVENTS

All major political entities were presented in the central news of the TV stations, with a different ratio, and some TV stations disregarded smaller entities.

TV stations Sitel and Alfa made more frequent mentions of SDSM (Sitel, 123 reports about SDSM, 98 about VMRO-DPMNE; Alfa: SDSM 123 mentions, VMRO DPMNE 110), and on Kanal 5 and Nova the two major parties were nearly identical (Kanal 5: SDSM 127, VMRO DPMNE 133, Nova: SDSM 79, VMRO DPMNE 80). In the sense of quality, however, towards SDSM there was mainly a negative attitude stated, even a demonizing one (Alfa in 44 reports, Nova in 20 reports, Kanal 5 in 19), and a positive attitude towards VMRO DPMNE (Alfa: 43 reports,

Nova: 24, Kanal 5: 19). On 24 Vesti (111-86), Alsat M (67 – 37), Telma (54 – 49) and TV 21 (59 – 54), the higher representation numbers were for the ruling party compared to the opposition and a neutrally critical attitude was expressed towards them more often as well. The public service, MTV1 and MTV2, did not express an explicit attitude towards political entities and represented them equally. The national television set aside the most time for representing the smaller parties.

The political entities of Albanians (DUI, DPA, Besa, etc.) were more significantly presented only on TV stations: Alsat M and TV 21, as well as on MTV 1 and 2, while on other TV stations they were rarely mentioned.

3. BALANCE IN REPORTING ON THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The first programme service of the Macedonian Television achieved the widest balance in terms of quantity among political entities, and they reported about the campaigns of all election participants. MTV1 however, did not provide an analytical approach; rather they only conveyed what happened at the events.

TV stations 24 Vesti, Alsat M and TV 21 had an analytical approach to monitoring the campaign, raising topics about its quality, rhetoric (especially nationalistic), feasibility or potential manipulations with pre-election promises and programmes, etc. TV stations Sitel, Alfa, TV Nova and

Kanal 5 while reporting about the campaign, favoured the party VMRO DPMNE in several ways. The activities of this party were covered in a block of reports in the first part of the news, and the opposition was presented in the second part, sometimes right before the end, with news on other topics in between. The reports about the activities of VMRO DPMNE leader Nikola Gruevski were reportage packages and had a higher production quality (greeting people, speeches from several locations) as compared to the reports of the activities of the opposition's leader Zoran Zaev, who was mostly presented with a single statement

4. MOST TYPICAL EXAMPLES OF NEGATIVE OR POSITIVE FRAMING

The most frequent topic for negative framing of the party SDSM was the topic of state bilingualism. TV stations Sitel, TV Nova, Kanal 5 and Alfa reported on this topic only in the context that the announcement of the opposition's leader for solving the issue of use of languages, was in the direction of federalization of the county, which coincides with the standpoints of VMRO DPMNE. In these reports, the opposition did not get an opportunity to present their side, rather statements from their members were simply used, which were linked to the specific context (Sitel: 'The messages are that the people at these elections will decide in what kind of country they wish to live – is it a unitary Macedonia or a federalized Macedonia that is conspired by SDSM leader Zoran Zaev', TV Nova: 'The future federalization or cantonization of the country whose name will be decided further on, has three stages that will be gradually deter-

mined in the next several years. State bilingualism is just the first stage of federalization, along with cantonization as an interim path to separating parts of Macedonia, was the analysis of the weekly paper Republika', Alfa: 'The rhetoric for re-defining, changing the Constitution, state bilingualism was not used by Zaev only at rallies in the election campaign, SDSM have continuously played the card of bargaining with national interests; Kanal 5: 'Experts fear that Zaev's announcements for expanding the Framework Agreement can push Macedonia into a new ethnic crisis').

The partiality towards VMRO-DPMNE from these TV stations was made by different approaches to covering the pre-election campaign and in several cases by non-critically conveying messages where the party interferes with the state, when party leader Nikola Gruevski reported about new foreign investments.