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LENS

of the public broadcaster

monitoring of the news programme of
TVCG during the campaign for parliamentary
elections (2016) and local elections in
Andrijevica, Budva, Gusinje and Kotor (2016)



Centar za građansko obrazovanje
Centre for Civic Education

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November, 2016.

THE PRE-ELECTION LENS OF THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER

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Publisher:

Centre for Civic Education (CCE)



Centar za građansko obrazovanje
Centre for Civic Education

Library:

Democracy

Editor:

Daliborka Uljarević

Authors:

Damir Nikočević
Svetlana Pešić

Associate on publication:

Isidora Radonjić

Design and production:

Centre for Civic Education (CCE)

Proofread:

Centre for Civic Education (CCE)

ISBN 978-86- 85591-78- 5

COBISS.CG-ID 31689232



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Introduction

The report “Pre-election lens of the Public broadcaster” by the Centre for Civic Education (CCE) was written as part of the programme *Media and democracy*. The CCE monitored the reporting of RTCG from the submission of the last candidacy for the 2016 parliamentary election (20 September 2016) until the end of the pre-election silence (16 October 2016). The **main objective** of this analysis is to inform the public about TVCG’s reporting during the campaign and initiate discussion about the impartiality and quality of its work as a public service of all citizens of Montenegro.

The monitoring report provides an overview of the representation of different political actors in the public service, specifically on TVCG¹, during the analysed period, as well as of the way these actors were represented in the key news programmes before and during the election silence. **As RTCG is a public broadcaster with national coverage whose purpose is to inform and educate citizens, and satisfy their needs for timely and accurate information, objective reporting is a key precondition for development of a democratically aware public and a culture of free electoral choice.**

The Interim report of the OSCE/EDIHR observatory mission to the 2016 parliamentary elections in Montenegro (08 - 28 September 2016) notes: “*The country has a diverse media environment with media outlets divided along political lines. The legal framework provides for general requirements of the election campaign coverage in media, mainly focusing on the requirements related to the allocation of free air time by the public broadcasters. The Agency for Electronic Media is the regulatory body that oversees the compliance of the broadcast media with the legal framework. A parliamentary committee has been established to monitor implementation of the laws related to the media*”. The report further states: “As required by the election law, the National Public Broadcaster RTCG is providing contestants with 200 seconds of free time daily for campaign advertisements. In addition, each contestant receives ten-minutes to broadcast their opening and closing rallies and three three-minute blocks to show footage of three rallies of the party’s choice.”²

The acting editor of the First channel of RTCG, Aleksandar Mirković, told the public in September of 2016 that RTCG went even further and hired an expert from the public broadcaster of one of the EU member states “to assist us, so that this election campaign on RTCG could be ran as well as possible”.³ Earlier, on his visit to Montenegro in February 2016 to speak at the conference «*Freedom of expression and responsibility of the media*», president of the Venice Commission Gianni Buquicchio said that the media had a fundamental role to play ahead of the elections, especially during the election campaign. He added that the most important thing was to leave the citizens the freedom to form their own opinion. “*A biased media will try to manipulate that opinion, but the impartiality of the public media is essential for the free expression and right to vote*”, he stressed.⁴

1 Radio of Montenegro nor portal of RTCG was analysed

2 <http://www.osce.org/me/odihr/elections/montenegro/270851?download=true>

3 <http://www.rtcg.me/vijesti/drustvo/140941/rtcg-spremna-da-kvalitetno-prati-kampanju.html>

4 <http://www.cdm.me/drustvo/crna-gora/neprihvatljivo-je-da-javni-servisi-izbjegavaju-eticke-standarde>



The sample

During the 26 days of monitoring, the CCE analysed the reporting of the public service using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The criteria for the selection of programmes on TVCG for analysis included viewership, involvement of party representatives and the focus on elections as a subject matter, as well as their potential impact on voters. This narrowed the sample to the main news programme **DNEVNIK 2**, as well as to the following special shows: **Interview**, **Debate** with the leaders of electoral lists at the 2016 parliamentary elections; **Debate** with the leaders of electoral lists at the local elections in **Budva**, **Kotor**, **Gusinje** and **Andrijevica**. The CCE's team also monitored the shows **Accents** and **Red phone**, but they were not included in the final analysis as they did not feature electoral participants' in the observed period. Also excluded from the final analysis was the feature **Presentation of programmes, parties and coalitions**, as it only consisted of 30-minute presentations by the leaders of electoral lists, shortly announced by the anchor, without any editorial input.

The following indicators were monitored by the CCE:

- The amount of time allocated to political actors by the public broadcaster;
- The way in which the actors are presented;
- Topics featured;
- Observance of the Code of journalists;
- Observance of election and media legislation.

Methodology

The analysis took into account not only the content of the show/report, but also the context and the approach to the given actor or topic.

In addition to the collected data, the monitoring produced a detailed analysis of representation of individual political actors running for the elections in the reporting of the public broadcaster.

Quantitative and qualitative analysis

During the period of observation we measured the total amount of **time** allocated to each political actor (directly or indirectly) and the **tone** used to report on them, classifying them as highly negative, negative, neutral, positive, or supporting/affirmative, in order to identify possible differences in the representation of different political actors.

For the purposes of measurement, the following scale was used to code the impression that the analysed programmes tried to produce in the viewers with regard to particular actors or topics:

- Highly negative – 1;
- Negative – 2;
- Neutral – 3;
- Positive – 4;
- Supporter/affirmative – 5.

Whereby:

- 1 – indicates that a certain actor was portrayed in highly negative light, containing negative connotations, comments or one-sided criticisms of that actor (the tone of presentation of both the actors and the context (backgrounds) are negative);
- 2 – evidence of a negative attitude (the tone of presentation of either actors OR context is negative);



- 3 – gives a neutral picture (neutral tone of presentation of actors and context);
- 4 – evidence of positive attitude (the tone of presentation of actors OR context is positive);
- 5 – obvious highly positive attitude, questions that are asked are affirmative, ample room for the response (tone of presentation of both actors and context is positive).

We also assessed the implementation of ethical and programme principles, professional standards and the RTCG Rules on reporting on the content of pre-election campaign for the 2016 parliamentary elections, as well as the RTCG Rules on reporting of the content of pre-election campaign for the 2016 local elections in Budva, Kotor, Gusinje and Andrijevica.

Special attention was paid to the balance or the lack thereof in the amount of airtime allocated to the presentation of different electoral lists. The analysis further focused on the content and manner in which the information was presented, as well as on the overall quality of reporting in terms of importance and relevance of the content.

The monitoring team collected information on:

- The selection and diversity of guests;
- The place within the programme;
- Relevance of the topics;
- Journalists' familiarity with a topic;
- Journalists (im)partiality.

In developing the research methodology and quality control, the CCE team received important advisory support from the journalist Duško Vuković, which we hereby gratefully acknowledge.



Legal framework

“Media in the Republic of Montenegro are free. Republic of Montenegro prohibits censorship of media. Republic of Montenegro protects and guarantees the freedom of information in line with the standards stipulated by international documents on human rights and freedoms (UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, EU).”⁵

The Law on Public Broadcasting services of Montenegro⁶ requires the national public broadcaster to ensure, in the course of pre-election campaign, equal presentation of political parties, coalitions and individuals running for the elections. According to the ethical and quality standards of the profession, RTCG is expected to produce news programme that is free of all forms of discrimination or bias. Among the 17 clauses related to content, the Law introduces the obligation of the public broadcaster to provide space for free and open expression of different opinions and views on issues of public interest, contributions to the protection and improvement of fundamental human rights and freedoms, democratic values and institutions, plurality of opinions, culture of public dialogue, language standards, privacy and personal dignity. Among other things, the contents should also stimulate development and improvement of the democratic culture in the society.

From the day their candidacy is confirmed until the end of the campaign, candidates have the right to communicate to the public their profiles, programmes, and activities free of charge through RTCG, as well as through the regional and local public broadcasters, making use of the same time slots and programmes, on daily basis, and with the same amount of air time.⁷

The *Law on Electronic media* stipulates that to safeguard the public interest to be adequately informed, the public broadcasters should, among other, “ensure, throughout the pre-election campaign, equal representation of political parties, coalitions and candidates whose candidacies have been confirmed.”⁸

Ahead of the 2016 parliamentary elections, RTCG published twice the Rules on reporting on the content of pre-election campaign for the parliamentary elections of 16 October 2016⁹, as well as the Rules on reporting on the content of pre-election campaign for the 16 October 2016 local elections in Budva, Kotor, Gusinje and Andrijevica.¹⁰

These rules require RTCG to provide the public with accurate, fair and balanced reporting on the election process and on the opinions of the representatives of each confirmed electoral list on different topics of the pre-election campaign. “The goal of reporting on the pre-election campaign is to ensure

⁵ Law on Media, Official Gazette of RME no. 51/02, 62/02

⁶ Law on Public Broadcasting Services of Montenegro, Official Gazette no. 79/08

⁷ Law on the Election of Councilors and Members of Parliament, Official Gazette of the Republic of Montenegro no. 16/2000, 9/2001, 41/2002, 46/2002, 45/2004, 48/2006 and 56/2006, and Official Gazette of Montenegro no. 46/2011, 14/2014, 47/2014, and 12/2016.

⁸ Law on Electronic Media, Article 74, Official Gazette of MNE no. 46/10, 40/11, 53/11

⁹ <http://www.rtcg.me/sw4i/download/files/article/P%20R%20A%20V%20I%20L%20A%20za%20parlamentarne.docx?id=1105>, 19.07.2016. <http://www.rtcg.me/sw4i/download/files/article/P%20R%20A%20V%20I%20L%20A%20za%20parl.%20izbore%20NOVA.docx?id=1203>, 5.10.2016.

¹⁰ <http://www.rtcg.me/sw4i/download/files/article/PRAVILA%20za%20lokalne%20izbore.docx?id=1104>, 5.08.2016.



that the public receives objective information on the programmes and activities of the candidates, and thus assist the voters in making an informed choice.”¹¹

According to the professional principles, standards, programme principles and the principles of public service summed up in the Rules, RTCG is bound to continuously communicate to the public, its material and technical capacities allowing, the course and content of the pre-election campaign, through its news programmes and other shows and debates, and to safeguard balance and equality, without privileging any of the candidates.

The right of all candidates to have their programmes and campaign activities presented in the RTCG programmes starts on the day in which the State Election Commission confirms their candidacy, and ends at the start of the election silence.¹²

According to these Rules, the time slots and duration of the dedicated programme tranches is to be set by the programming and editorial team of RTCG, who will take care to ensure equal representation of all election lists in line with the Law on amendments to the Law on the election of Councillors and Members of Parliament¹³. RTCG pledged not to limit itself to the reporting on events organised by political parties, but to seek information from other sources, respecting professional principles and standards and bearing in mind equal representation of all candidates.¹⁴

Also, during the reporting in pre-election campaign, RTCG promised to adhere to the principles of **independence, equality, balance and impartiality**. These meant that RTCG’s work would be based on editorial independence, that it would not favour any of the participants, that the public broadcaster would provide equal access to its programmes to all candidates, shunning all forms of discrimination, that the reporting on the election participants would be balanced, and that the public broadcaster would accord due consideration to all points of view, without promoting its own opinions on the participants in the election campaign. The latter would have meant, among other, not including journalists’ comments in its news programmes, and excluding party and electoral propaganda from its reports on the regular activities of public institutions, officials and representatives of local self-governments in the course of the campaign.¹⁵ Finally, all news and other reports on the work of public institutions were to strictly adhere to the principle of professionalism and journalist’s ethics.

As for the content dedicated to the presentation of programmes and activities of candidates confirmed by the State Election Commission, the latter should be clearly marked and separated from other programme content. Within these dedicated time slots, the candidates can also use own audio and video material to present their list¹⁶.

RTCG also pledged to provide space for encounters between the candidates through TV and radio debates.

According to these rules, the RTCG would have presented the electoral participants in the following manner:

- Daily – in special blocks on the news shows *Vijesti*, *Dnevnik 1,2 and 3*, *Novosti dana*;

¹¹ RTCG’s Rules on reporting on the content of pre-election campaign for 16 October 2016 parliamentary elections, Article 3

¹² Ibid, Article 4

¹³ Ibid, Article 1

¹⁴ Ibid, Article 2

¹⁵ Ibid, Article 6

¹⁶ Ibid, Article 13



- In 30-min segments dedicated to the presentation of the candidates with mediation by RTCG journalists;
- Twice a day in reports from the campaign rallies specifically designated by the candidates (duration 3 minutes);
- Reports from the first and the final campaign rallies (duration 10 minutes; the report could be prepared by the media pool of the candidate);
- In debate shows, twice a week, each lasting 120 minutes and dedicated to specific topics, with equal participation of all candidates (a total of 6 debates);
- In interviews with representatives of the candidate lists, each lasting 60 minutes and containing questions on clearly specified issues;
- One final encounter between the leaders of the candidate lists, in the duration of 20 minutes.¹⁷

Programme principles and professional standards¹⁸ is a document containing detailed overview of the commitments, objectives, professional standards, as well as standards of production, privacy and data collection, reporting on extraordinary events, professional resources, covert data collection methods, analysis, archive material, respect for the opinions of the listeners and viewers, special interest programmes, presentation of specific societal groups, and editorial independence.

The document pays special attention to the obligations of RTCG as a public service, and stresses that “RTCG as a public broadcasting service provides the citizens of Montenegro with high-level reporting in line with the standards contained in international documents on public electronic broadcasting”¹⁹. This includes the general principles that underpin the role of RTCG as a public broadcaster: **universality, diversity, independence and recognisable style**. The objectives of RTCG state that RTCG “accommodates the needs and interests of listeners and viewers, in line with the provisions of the Law on RTCG and Statute of RTCG”. Among other things, one of the objectives of RTCG is the **timely, comprehensive, objective, balanced and credible analysis of events** in Montenegro, the region and the world, **which supports fair and constructive dialogue at the local, regional and national level**.

Further, it stipulates that the reporting should adhere to the principles of accuracy, objectivity, censorship, fact verification, credibility, right to response and correction, transparency, righteousness, language, promotion of language, culture and art, public access to important events, broad issue coverage, balanced reporting, balanced offer of films and documentaries, reporting on the work of the Parliament, reporting on political parties, pre-election campaigns, relations with the army, relations with the police.

Regarding pre-election campaigns, the document notes that RTCG will adopt separate Rules for each election in line with the Law on public and broadcasting services.

When it comes to relations with public institutions, RTCG must remain independent and autonomous of its founder. “Editorial teams and journalists cooperate with public authorities on equal terms and do not receive or carry out their orders. RTCG programmes provide comprehensive and detailed reports on the work of the Government and other public bodies and convey the opinions of the

¹⁷ Ibid, Article 16

¹⁸ http://www.rtcg.me/sw4i/download/files/article/principi_i_standardi_rtcg.pdf?id=81

¹⁹ http://www.rtcg.me/sw4i/download/files/article/principi_i_standardi_rtcg.pdf?id=81



opposition and representatives of the civil sector accurately and in detail. Editorials and journalists should keep professional distance from all instruments of government, lest they jeopardise the integrity of RTVCG.”²⁰

The *Law on the election of Councillors and Members of Parliament* regulates the matter of participation of national and local self-government officials, who can act as representatives of candidate lists and promote election programmes and candidacies during their appearances in electronic media during the election campaign, including commercial and non-profit media, and can do so in the manner and scope prescribed by the legal provisions on the presentation of representatives of candidate lists in the media during the election campaign²¹. These officials are prohibited “to misuse their media appearances in the capacity of public officials in the course of the campaign to promote their candidacy or its election programme”.

²⁰ http://www.rtcg.me/sw4i/download/files/article/principi_i_standardi_rtcg.pdf?id=81

²¹ Law on election of Councillors and Members of Parliament, Official Gazette of the Republic of Montenegro 46/2001



Overview of findings

Dnevnik 2

General information

The main part of the analysed pre-election news programme of TVCG was its central news show – *Dnevnik 2*.

Starting on 21 September 2016 (first day after the deadline for the submission of candidacies), the team of the Centre for Civic Education (CCE) analysed 26 editions of *Dnevnik 2*, of a total duration of 17 hours, 37 minutes and 39 seconds. We also monitored *Dnevnik 3*, in view of the previous experience with frequent differences in the reporting between the two shows. However, no significant differences were detected in the period under observation, and *Dnevnik 3* was subsequently excluded from the analysis.

Almost six and a half hours, more precisely **six hours, 22 minutes and 23 seconds** or **35.81% of the total duration of *Dnevnik 2* in this period was dedicated to elections**, i.e. to the issues of interest to the CCE's analysis: all segments mentioning political parties or individuals representing the parties and coalitions that ran for the national and local elections in October 2016. It should be stressed that our analysis excluded individuals who were not formally representing the candidates, but did actively participate in the campaign of certain actors in an indirect manner. For instance, Aleksandar Andrija Pejović was not formally listed as one of the candidates, and thus we coded all of the reporting on his activities as chief negotiator with the EU as not election-related coverage. Meanwhile, however, Pejović represented the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) in the debate organised on TVCG on 30 September 2016, which we did analyse in the part of our study that deals with election-specific programmes. This analysis uncovered a few other similar examples.

Izborni blok (Election Block), a special thematic unit within *Dnevnik 2*, had a total duration of *three hours, 45 minutes and 41 seconds*, or 55.51% of the total time dedicated to elections, and almost 20% (19.88%) of the total duration of *Dnevnik 2* during the period 21 September 2016 to 16 October 2016.

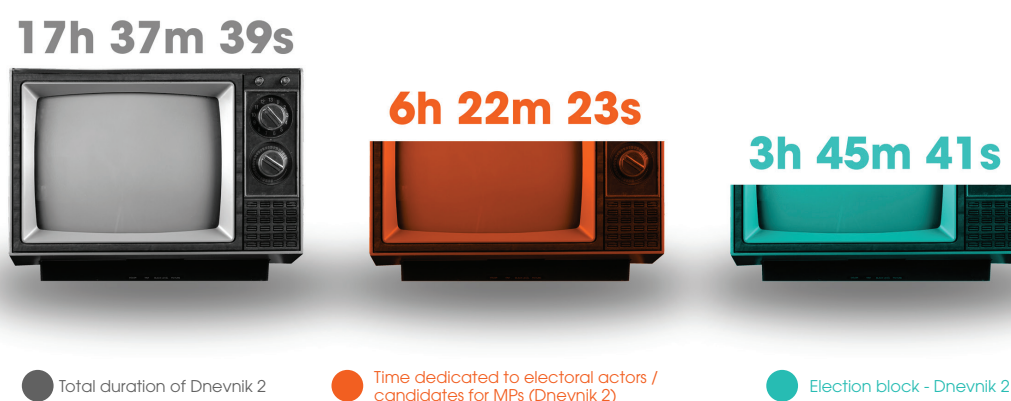


Figure 1. Total duration of *Dnevnik 2*, time dedicated to electoral actors, duration of Electoral block



It should be said that during the election silence, and on the day of the elections, TVCG reported on the attempt of the “coup d’etat” in its news shows that, due to the elections, were aired more frequently than usual. According to the opposition, this affected the election turnout and fewer voters went to the polls in the afternoon than in the morning. Nevertheless, regardless of the possible political implications, it would have been difficult to disregard such information which concerns public security, especially as the information came from the from the state institutions. The question remains, and it is unlikely that it will ever be settled conclusively, whether and to what extent this information, that appeared in all media, affected the turnout and the choice of the voters.

Out of the 26 instalments of Dnevnik 2 in the pre-election period

- 1) Nine were edited and hosted by Biljana Stanković, for a total duration of six hours, 10 minutes and 52 seconds, or 35.14%;
- 2) Six were edited and hosted by Nebojša Skender, for a total duration of four hours, 18 minutes and 18 seconds, or 24.06%;
- 3) Four were edited and hosted by Jelena Otašević, for a total duration of two hours, 34 minutes and 39 seconds, or 13.49%;
- 4) Four were edited and hosted by Ivana Šebek, for a total duration of two hours, 24 minutes, 32 minutes, or 12.91%;
- 5) Three were edited and hosted by Ratka Pavlović, for a total duration of two hours, nine minutes and 18 seconds, or 12.04%;



Figure 2. Time allocation - editors and hosts of Dnevnik 2, from 21 September to 16 October 2016.

In the next chapters we will analyse all political subjects that featured on TVCG during the pre-election period, with a special focus on parties and coalitions that secured seats in the Parliament, including Positive Montenegro which failed to enter the Parliament but received considerable attention in *Dnevnik 2* during the pre-election period.



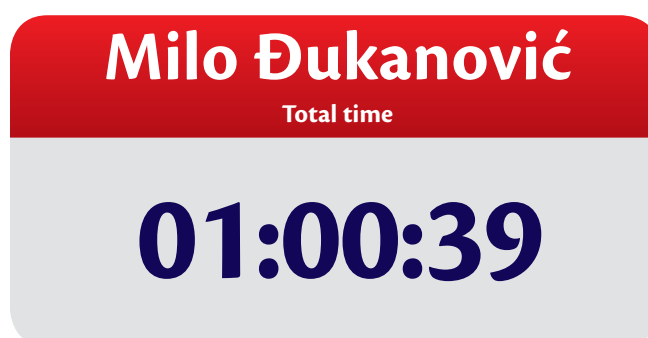
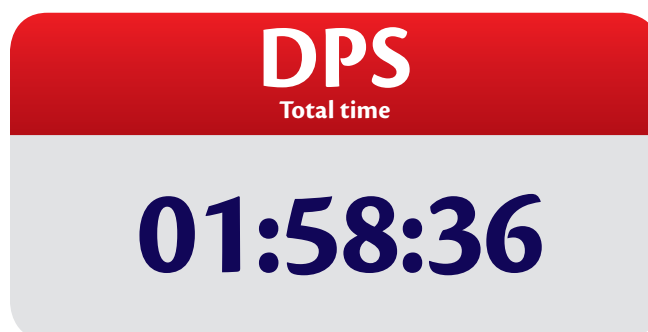
Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS)



Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) is commonly described as the force that controls the editorial policy of the public broadcaster RTCG. However, with the formation of the Government of electoral trust, which was preceded by a change in the editorial structure, there is evidence of greater balance in the news programme. Nevertheless, it is interesting that Andrija Nikolić, a long-time RTCG journalist and editor of the show “*U centar*”, appeared as a candidate of DPS at the October elections.²²

Out of the total time dedicated to electoral actors (six hours, 22 minutes and 23 seconds), DPS and its candidates for the Parliament received one hour, 58 minutes and 36 seconds, far ahead of any other electoral actor. To things are of note here. First, this count includes the airtime in which DPS representatives appeared in their capacity as members of executive government. Namely, during the campaign time there was an enormous increase in the number of public events such as openings of new buildings, launches of new investments, cooperation agreements, tours of newly completed roads etc., that were obviously used to rally support for the government, turning public goods into free political marketing for the ruling parties. Second, this count excluded the appearances of individuals who obtained their position through political influence and intervention of DPS, such as the Minister of Economy Vladimir Kavarić or the chief negotiator Aleksandar Andrija Pejović, because they were not running as candidates for the election. Minister of Economy has thus appeared in a report on 29 September about the signing of a contract for the construction of the second block of the Thermal power plant in Pljevlja; the chief negotiator was featured in *Dnevnik 2* on 15 October in a report on the meeting of the negotiating teams of Montenegro and Serbia with the EU in Herceg Novi.

Of the total time dedicated to this party, the head of the list Milo Đukanović was featured for one hour and 39 seconds. In other words, more than half of the time dedicated to DPS in *Dnevnik 2* was taken up by the lead candidate, which reflects his importance for his party's campaign.



²² On the balance of different views on RTCG, more information is available in the analysis of CCE “Through whose eyes does the RTCG represent the Montenegrin reality?”, <http://media.cgo-cce.org/2016/07/cgo-cce-kroz-cije-pogled-e-nam-rtcg-predstavlja-crnogorsku-realnost.pdf>



Within the Election Block, the special thematic unit within *Dnevnik 2*, DPS was featured for 24 minutes and 51 second, 21 minutes and 31 seconds of which were occupied by the lead candidate Milo Đukanović.



While analysing representation of DPS in *Dnevnik 2*, we noted that a large share of the coverage was allocated precisely to the already mentioned surge in the number of formal events in which the DPS candidates took part in their capacity as representatives of the government. There are many such examples, from Đukanović's visits to the Montenegrin diaspora after he attended the 71st session of UN's General Assembly (*Dnevnik 2*, 21 September), opening of the mine shaft in Bioče (*Dnevnik 2*, 24 September), Đukanović's visit to the miners in Pljevlja for the Miners' Day (*Dnevnik 2*, 24 September), signing of the contract for the construction of the second block of the Thermal power plant in Pljevlja (*Dnevnik 2*, 29 September), a five-minute live appearance of the Minister of Tourism Branimir Gvozdenović on the Day of the Regional Water Supply Network (*Dnevnik 2*, 29 September), the start of the laying of underwater power cable (*Dnevnik 2*, 4 October), Prime Minister's visit to Brezovik and the Centre for the elderly (*Dnevnik 2*, 10 October), Prime Minister's visit to the highway construction site (*Dnevnik 2*, 11 October), etc. Considering the nature of these events, it is clear that DPS, as a ruling party, used public resources to garner more air time to promote its position, using the appearances of its members as public officials. All of these events were presented by the journalists in highly positive light. However, the same was not true of the reports on the activities of the opposition's ministers in the Government of Electoral Trust. A good example is the Minister of Interior, Goran Danilović, candidate of the Grand Coalition Key at the national parliamentary elections, whose activities were frequently critically assessed by the journalists, unlike those of the DPS ministers in comparable situations. The editors thus took a visibly different stance towards the two sets of actors.

In the Election Block, whose purpose was to offer formal, brief introductions to the candidates' programmes and electoral materials as part of *Dnevnik 2*, DPS received approximately the same amount of broadcasting time as other parties and coalitions, contrary to the other segments of *Dnevnik 2*, where the opposition did not have the "privilege" to appear as often as DPS. More precisely, out of 56 reports featuring DPS, 19 of them, or one third, was within the Election Block segment, while nearly 90% of appearances of other parties were in this segment, which is a clear indicator the dominant presence of DPS in the regular programme of *Dnevnik 2*.

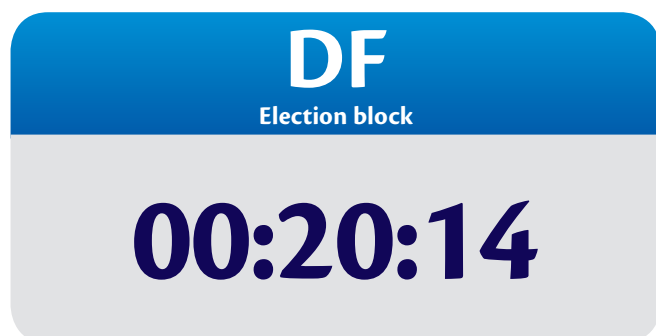
Democratic Front (DF)



Out of the total of six hours, 22 minutes and 23 seconds dedicated to every electoral actor on TVCG, the oppositional coalition Democratic Front (DF) and its candidates in the parliamentary elections received 39 minutes and 49 seconds. During its campaign, DF criticised the public broadcaster on several occasions for biased reporting. Jovan Vučurović, director of the Media team of DF, once stated that RTCG refused to air a report from a rally in Nikšić and that the editorial team violated several provisions of the Law on the election of councillors and members of parliament, as well as of the Law on Electronic media. He said this was an “organised action orchestrated by the directors of the public broadcaster, DPS, and the Agency for electronic media”, and warned that they will also look into the involvement of the staff of the OSCE “who meddle about in the affairs of the public broadcaster and tell them what is problematic and what isn’t.”²³ The editorial board of RTCG responded that: “In order to respect the Constitution and the laws of Montenegro, TVCG advises the leadership of DF to address their observations and complaints against the decisions of the editorial board of TVCG to the parliamentary Committee in charge of monitoring the implementation of the Law on the election of councillors and members of parliament, instead of public reactions that contain merely their political views, but not a single substantiated argument.”²⁴ They also pointed out that out of four reports submitted by the DF, RTCG asked DF to edit two in order to remove parts which the RTCG judged to be contrary to the law, while the other two were broadcasted in their entirety.

Out of the total time allocated to DF, the head of the coalition list, Andrija Mandić, was present for 17 minutes and 35 seconds. DF received remarkably less air time than DPS, which is entirely due to the fact that DPS relied on its representatives from the executive government to promote the party.

In the Election Block DF received 20 minutes and 14 seconds of air time, out of which their lead candidate, Andrija Mandić, was featured for 10 minutes and 43 seconds. Overall, this was slightly below the amount of time allocated to the representatives



²³ <http://www.cdm.me/politika/vucurovic-tvcg-zabranila-emitovanje-spota-sa-skupa-u-niksicu>

²⁴ <http://www.cdm.me/drustvo/odboru-uputiti-primjedbe-na-legitimne-odluke-tvcg>



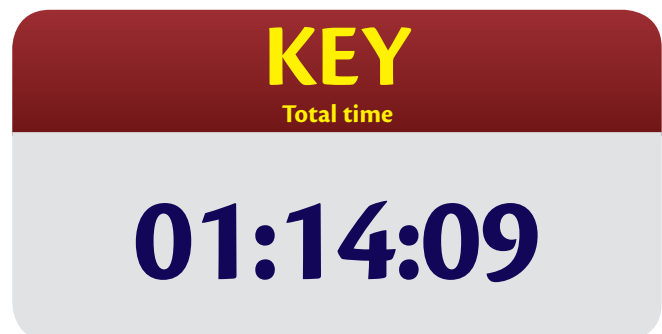
of other parties and coalitions, however, the Election Block only aired the material submitted by the running parties and coalitions.

CCE's analysis did not find either positive or negative attitude in the reporting on DF's activities. In all analysed cases we recorded neutral reporting, albeit the majority of reports were based on the materials prepared by the DF's team and aired within the Election Block. DF appeared in very few reports in other segments of *Dnevnik 2*, which is probably the best indicator of the relationship between the public broadcaster and that oppositional structure.

Grand Coalition Key (DEMOS, SNP, URA)



The Grand Coalition Key, which is composed of DEMOS, Socialist People's Party (SNP) and Civic movement United Reform Action (URA), occupied one hour, 14 minutes and 9 seconds out of the total air time dedicated to the election participants (six hours, 22 minutes and 23 seconds), ranking it second after DPS according to the total amount of air time they occupied on RTCG. Part of the reason was that Goran Danilović, Minister of Interior in the Government of Electoral Trust, was one of the candidates on the list of the Coalition Key, and was often featured in the news reports as the voters' register is under the responsibility of MI. He also appeared before the Ministry of Interior in connection to a number of homicides and conflicts between criminal groups that occurred in this period.



Out of 21 segments within *Dnevnik 2*, as many as 16, or over one third, do not belong to the section Election Block. Nevertheless it was evident that the editors were not favourably disposed towards Minister Danilović. For instance, in a report in *Dnevnik 2* broadcasted on 21 September, Muhamed Đokaj of the Agency for the protection of personal data criticised the Minister of Interior, but the editors chose to shun the principle of balanced reporting and get the opinion of the other side. MI's reaction was not published until *Dnevnik 3* came on air, and it was done in the form of a press release. The editor of this edition of *Dnevnik 2* was Ratka Pavlović. CCE's team found two more occasions where the reporting appeared to be biased against Minister Danilović – 26 September (editor of *Dnevnik 2* Biljana Stanković, journalist Dijana Drašković) and 6 October (editor of *Dnevnik 2* Nebojša Skenderi, journalist Tatjana Debeljević). In both cases the issue at hand was the voters' register. In the first case they failed to obtain a statement from Minister Danilović in response to the criticism levelled at him by professor Đordije Blažić. In the second case, although the balance was observed and the statement obtained from the Ministry, professor Blažić was given several minutes which he used to criticise the Minister's failure to sign the voters' register, and the criticism consequently occupied a much larger portion of the segment. The other 18 segments about the Minister of the Interior were neutral in tone, but there was a clear difference compared to the presentation of DPS members of the government, who received highly positive coverage for their participation in more or less formal events.

Out of the total time dedicated to this coalition, the leader of the list Miodrag Lekić was featured for 18 minutes and 51 seconds, slightly more than the head of the DF list, and far less compared to the Prime Minister Đukanović.



As for the Election Block, a special thematic unit of *Dnevnik 2*, Coalition Key was featured for 29 minutes and 3 seconds, out of which the head of the list Miodrag Lekić occupied 18 minutes and 51 seconds. Key was the coalition that received the lengthiest coverage within the Election Block, but it should be noted that their candidate appeared only in this segment *Dnevnik 2*, i.e. he did not receive a single mention in the main news programme outside of the segment exclusively dedicated to the elections.

Miodrag Lekić

Total time

00:18:51

KEY

Election block

00:29:03

Miodrag Lekić

Election block

00:18:51

The fact that one of the members of the Coalition Key was in the Government ensured that this coalition took the most airtime of *Dnevnik 2* after DPS, although their representative in the government was often mentioned negatively. Out of 36 reports, 23 were featured in the segment Election Block (63.88%).

Democratic Montenegro (DCG/Democrats)



Out of the total of six hours, 22 minutes and 23 seconds of *Dnevnik 2* dedicated to electoral actors in the observed period, Democratic Montenegro (Democrats) and its candidates were present for 31 minutes and 20 seconds. During the election campaign Democrats had severe complaints about the work of the public broadcaster RTCG regarding its initial refusal to broadcast their promotional video²⁵. The Democrats announced that RTCG had tried to block the broadcast of their video “Više nas je, ne boj se” (There’s more of us, don’t be afraid) without offering any justifications.

RTCG explained that they requested additional consultation with the Agency for electronic media, and that they would inform the Democrats as soon as the final decision was made. Soon after that, the Council of RTCG and the Agency for electronic media approved the broadcast of the said video.²⁶

Democrats

Total time

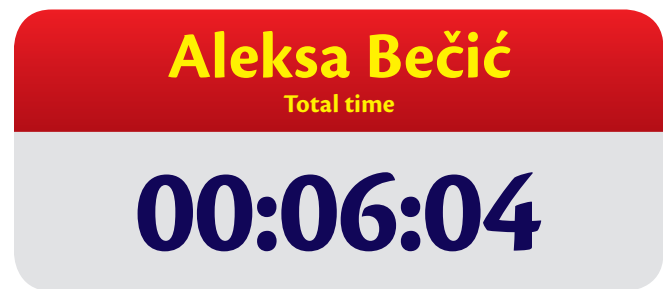
00:31:20

²⁵ <http://www.vijesti.me/izbori2016/demokrate-rtcg-pokusava-da-zaustavi-emitovanje-naseg-spot-a-906763>

²⁶ <http://demokrate.me/2016/10/11/agencija-potvrdila-da-je-urednistvo-rtcg-nezakonito-zaustavilo-nas-spot/>



The leader of the Democrats' candidate list Aleksa Bečić was featured for 6 minutes and 4 seconds of the total time dedicated to his party - far less than any other lead candidate of the list that made it into the Parliament of Montenegro, except for Ervin Ibrahimović from BS. All of his appearances were featured within the Election Block.



Within the Election Block, Democrats were present for 12 minutes and 29 seconds, less than any other candidate list apart from the CCI and Bosniak party and the coalition "Albanci odlučno" (Albanians decisively). It should be, however, noted that the Election Block only aired the footage submitted by the candidates from their rallies.



CCE's analysis concluded that RTCG's reporting on the Democrats was neutral, and that very little time was dedicated to them outside of the Election Block: only four of the 17 installments of *Dnevnik 2* included in the analysis featured the Democrats: Initiative for the replacement of mayor Stijepović in *Dnevnik 2* from 29 September; the hearing of the SEC in the parliamentary Committee for monitoring and implementation of the elections in *Dnevnik 2* from 3 October; Parliamentary discussion on the voters' register and AFIS in *Dnevnik 2* from 4 October; Authorisation for the signing of voters register in *Dnevnik 2* from 6 October).

Socialist Democratic Party (SDP)



Social Democratic Party also belongs to the group of underrepresented parties, which only continues the practice of the public broadcaster RTCG in relation to this party, as was already been observed some of our previous studies.²⁷

Out of the total time dedicated to electoral actors (six hours, 22 minutes and 23 seconds) SDP with its representatives for MPs occupied 32 minutes and two seconds - similar to the Democrats, less than DF, and far less than DPS, Grand Coalition Key, or Social Democrats of Montenegro. SDP received notably less time as a result of the changes the party underwent shortly before the elections. Another important factor was the removal of the party's leader Ranko Krivokapić from the position of the Speaker of the Parliament, which cost SDP significant media space, especially during the pre-election campaign. However, even the Minister of Finance, also from SDP, was conspicuously absent from the RTCG reporting: as the representative of the opposition in the Government



²⁷ <http://media.cgo-cce.org/2016/07/cgo-cce-kroz-cije-pogleda-nam-rtcg-predstavlja-crnogorsku-realnost.pdf>

of Electoral Trust, he did not receive a single minute in *Dnevnik 2* unlike his former coalition partners from DPS, or former party colleagues from the Social Democrats, or even the other opposition-appointed Minister of Interior, Goran Danilović. Out of 21 segments mentioning SDP, as many as 19 (90.47%) were within the Election Block, which consisted almost entirely of the material prepared and submitted by the candidate parties.

Out of the total time dedicated to this party, the head of the list Ranko Krivokapić occupied 14 minutes and 5 seconds, all within the Election Block. Within this special news segment SDP received altogether 23 minutes and 5 seconds.

CCE's analysis revealed neither positive nor negative reporting on SDP's activities. In every case we observed we found the tone of reporting to be neutral, however the large majority of SDP's appearances were featured within the Election Block, which means that the material had been prepared by SDP itself.



Bosniak Party



Out of the total of six hours, 22 minutes and 23 seconds dedicated to electoral actors, the Bosniak Party (BS) and its candidates for MPs was featured for 10 minutes and 26 seconds of *Dnevnik 2*. Within that time, the lead candidate of the list Ervin Ibrahimović appeared in only 24 seconds, far less than any other leader of a candidate party or coalition. All of his appearances were within the Election Block. The president of the party Rafet Husović, who did not himself run for a seat in the Parliament, appeared in 1 minute and 17 seconds, also within the Election Block.

BS took up a total of eight minutes and 12 seconds of the Election Block, less than any other party except for CCI and Coalition "Albanians decisively". It should, however, be noted that the Election Block featured the material recorded by the candidates at their rallies, press conferences etc. and submitted to RTCG.



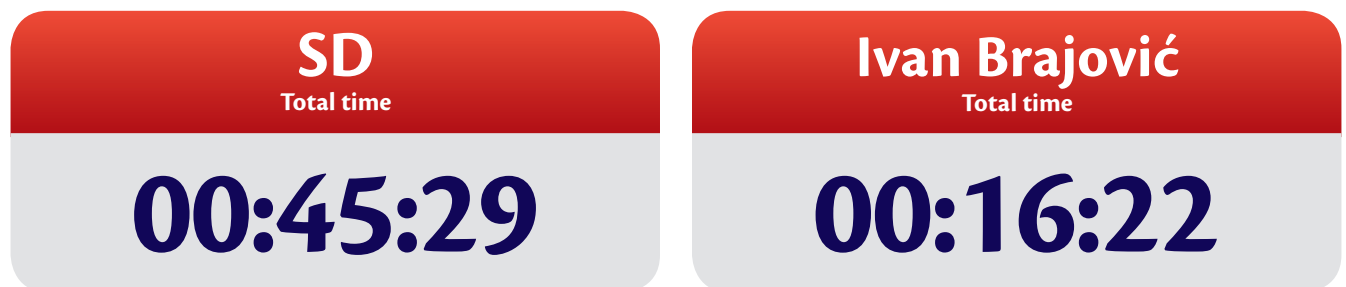
CCE's analysis revealed neutral reporting on the pre-election activities of BS. However, only one out of 13 instalments of *Dnevnik 2* that were analysed featured BS outside of the Electoral Block, in a 21 September segment dedicated to the landfills in northern Montenegro.



Social Democrats of Montenegro (SD)



Out of the total time dedicated to electoral actors (six hours, 22 minutes and 23 seconds), Social Democrats of Montenegro (SD) and their candidates for MPs appeared for 45 minutes and 29 seconds, which is the most time dedicated to any party apart from DPS and the Grand Coalition Key. The recorded length includes the times when the representatives of Social Democrats appeared in the capacity of government officials. Especially notable was the live appearance in *Dnevnik 2* of the minister Vujica Lazović on 25 September, on the occasion of the opening of Info fest, during which he had a chance to indirectly promote his ministry.



Another SD's candidate for the Parliament, Žarko Radulović, who also led the party's list in the local elections in Budva, appeared on 28 September in his capacity as representative of the Montenegrin tourist association, when he spoke about the arrival of Chinese tourists in Montenegro. Similarly, the Minister of Transport and Maritime Affairs Ivan Brajović appeared in a feature reporting on his visit to the highway construction site on 11 October. Though less prominent than DPS, Social Democrats also received ample opportunity to promote their party and their candidates indirectly through government activities.



Out of the total time dedicated to this party, the head of the list, Ivan Brajović, appeared in 16 minutes and 22 seconds.

As for the Election Block, the special thematic unit within *Dnevnik 2*, Social Democrats took up most time after the Grand Coalition Key, a total of 26 minutes and 16 seconds. Their lead candidate Ivan Brajović appeared in 14 minutes and two seconds.

Our analysis of the presence of Social Democrats in *Dnevnik 2* revealed that a large number of their appearances occurred in the reports on government activities, which was undoubtedly used as indirect form of free political marketing in the main news programme with large national viewership. SD had considerably more space than other electoral subjects, apart from DPS and the Key.



Coalition “Albanians Decisively” (FORCA, DUA, Albanian Alternative)

Coalition “Albanians Decisively” is the only Albanian group to enter the Parliament of Montenegro. During the campaign period, its representatives used their legal right to address their voters in Albanian in some of their appearances (mostly within the Election Block). This coalition and its candidates for MPs were featured for altogether eight minutes and 41 seconds on *Dnevnik 2*, all of them involving participation of the head of their list, Genci Nimanbegu.

Within the Election Block, which mostly comprised of materials submitted by the candidates to the public broadcaster, the coalition “Albanians decisively” was featured for five minutes and 45 seconds, less than any other electoral actor that won at least one seat in the Parliament of Montenegro.

Albanians Decisively Total time	Genci Nimanbegu Total time	Albanians Decisively Election block	Genci Nimanbegu Election block
00:08:41	00:08:41	00:05:45	00:05:45

CCE’s analysis found that RTCG had reported neutrally on the pre-election activities of the coalition, but also noted that out of the six reports on this electoral actor only one was outside of the Electoral Block (Agency for electronic media/DF video clip in *Dnevnik 2* of 22 September). Also, no translation from Albanian was provided, depriving the Montenegrin citizens who do not speak Albanian of information about this coalition’s offer.

Croatian Civic Initiative (CCI)



Croatian Civic Initiative (CCI) and its candidates for the Parliament occupied 11 minutes and 42 seconds of time on *Dnevnik 2* in the observed period, all of it within the Election Block. Out of the total time dedicated to this party, the head of its list Adrijan Vuksanović was featured for seven minutes and 20 seconds, all within the Election Block. CCI representatives did not appear in other segments of *Dnevnik 2* between 21 September and 16 October.

CCI Total time	Adrijan Vuksanović Total time	CCI Election block	Adrijan Vuksanović Election block
00:11:40	00:07:20	00:11:40	00:07:20

CCE’s analysis concluded that RTCG had reported neutrally on the pre-election activities of CCI.



Positive Montenegro (PMNE)



Although it failed to win seats in the Parliament of Montenegro at the October elections, Positive Montenegro (PMNE) was included in our analysis due to the large amount of time allocated to it in *Dnevnik 2*. More precisely, out of the total of six hours, 22 minutes and 23 seconds dedicated to electoral actors, Positive Montenegro and its candidates for the Parliament were featured for 38 minutes and 48 seconds. Especially frequent were the appearances of the PMNE's president Darko Pajović, who was at the time Speaker of the Parliament of Montenegro. The key appearances involved Pajović's visits to the European Parliament and Brussels (*Dnevnik 2*, 27 September and 28 September), and Romania and Latvia in connection to the ratification of the agreement between Montenegro and NATO (*Dnevnik 2*, 4 October and 6 October). Like the Social Democrats, Positive Montenegro profited from the fact that its leader occupied a high state function in the pre-election period to garner more media space than other parties.



Out of the total time dedicated to this party, its leader Darko Pajović was present for 36 minutes and 47 seconds, or nearly 95% (94.77%) of this party's time on *Dnevnik 2*. The same is true of the Election Block in which PMNE received 16 minutes and 47 seconds, out of which its leader occupied 14 minutes and 46 seconds.



Most of the reports featuring the representatives of Positive Montenegro on *Dnevnik 2* were dedicated to the regular and ceremonial duties of the Speaker of the Parliament, Darko Pajović, which was used for indirect promotion of the party in the main news programme. None of this was, however, sufficient to ensure party's entry into the Parliament.



Other electoral actors

Election lists and candidates for the Parliament which failed to win the seats - “Albanian coalition with a single goal”, Alternative Montenegro, Serbian Party, Party of pensioners, disabled persons and social justice, Democratic alliance of Abanians, Bosniak Democratic Community (BDC) and Party of Serbian Radicals – received a total of 36 minutes and 51 seconds on *Dnevnik 2*, all within the Election Block. The lead candidates of these parties and coalitions, were featured for a total of 9 minutes and 18 seconds in the Election Block.

Other electoral actors Total time	Other electoral actors Total time	Other electoral actors Election block	Other electoral actors Election block
00:36:51	00:09:18	00:36:51	00:09:18

All of these actors only appeared within the Election block of *Dnevnik 2*, and some of them did not even use this opportunity to present the material from their rallies and press conferences. In that sense, RTCG reported correctly and neutrally on their pre-election activities as much as was possible.

It should be noted that when deciding on the order of appearances of parties and candidates in the Election Block, RTCG did not use a clear criteria, and initially this segment opened up with the Social Democrats. After the parties were asked to draw the lots until the election silence the order of appearances of party materials within the Election Block followed the order of appearances on the ballot paper.



Comparative findings

Comparative analysis showed that DPS occupied by far the most time on RTCG out of the total dedicated to the election lists and candidates for the parliaments (01:58:39), mostly thanks to its representatives in the government who were also running as candidates for the Parliament. The second most featured candidate was the Grand Coalition Key (01:14:09), with more than half an hour more time than the strongest opposition group DF, mainly because of its minister, Goran Danilović, who often appeared in *Dnevnik 2*. Third in line were the Social Democrats (00:45:29), also thanks to their representatives in the government, followed by DF (00:39:49) and Positive Montenegro (00:38:48). Of the candidate parties and coalitions that secured a seat in the Parliament, the least represented in *Dnevnik 2* were the Democrats (00:12:29) and minority parties and coalitions – CCI (00:11:40), Bosniak Party (00:10:26) and the coalition „Albanians decisively“ (00:08:41).

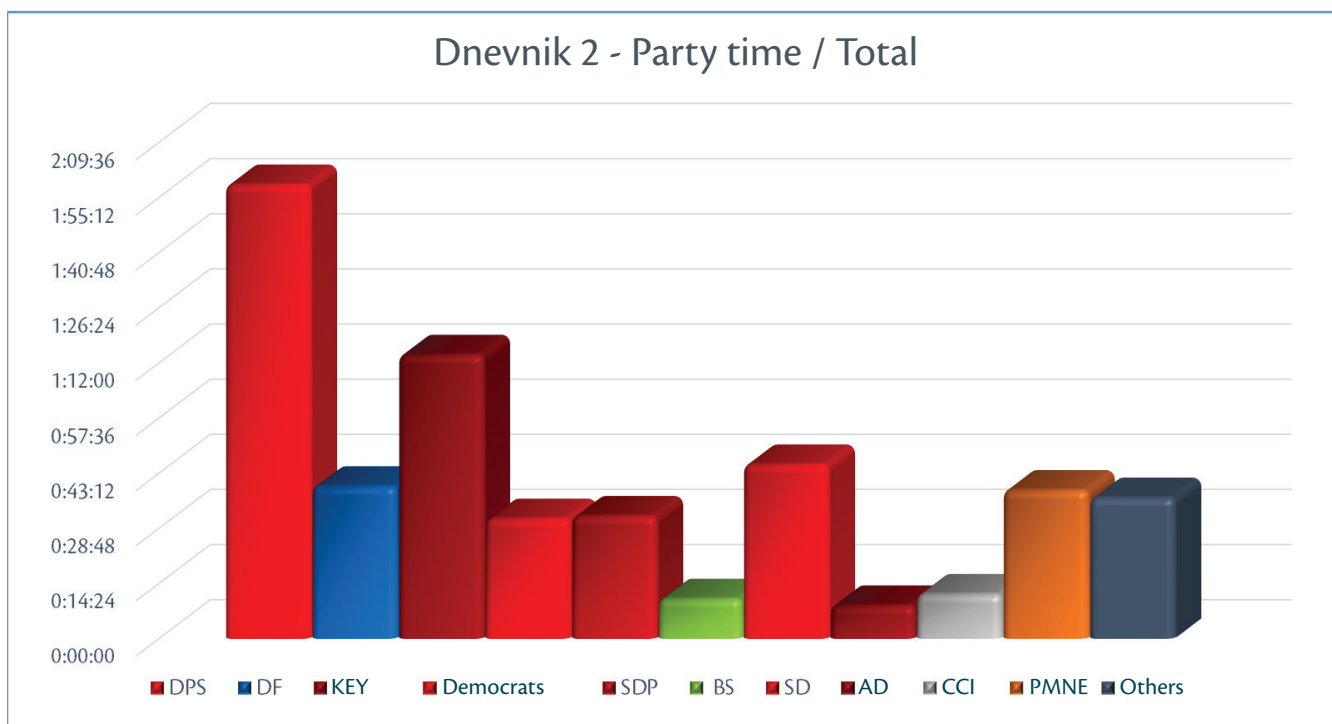


Figure 3. Total time allocated to the candidate parties and coalitions in October 2016 elections



Within the Election Block segment of the evening news, the Grand Coalition Key had the most time (00:29:03), followed by Social Democrats (00:26:16), DPS (00:24:51), and SDP (00:23:05). Of the candidates who won at least one seat in the Parliament, the least represented were Democratic Montenegro (00:12:09), CCI (00:11:40), Bosniak Party (BS) (00:08:12), and the coalition „Albanians decisively“ (00:05:45). Once again, it should be stressed that the Election Block segment of the *Dnevnik 2* mainly comprised the materials created by the candidates, and our study shows large differences in the extent to which they used this opportunity.

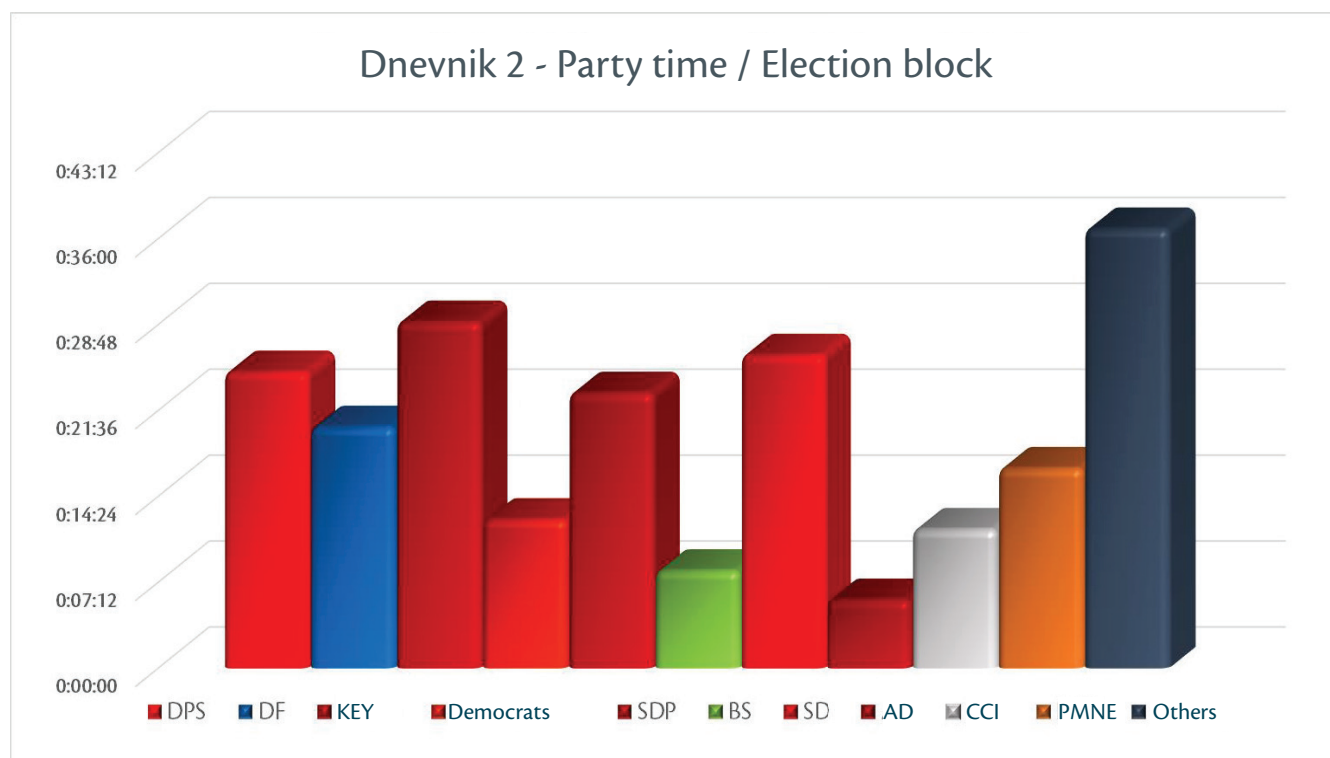
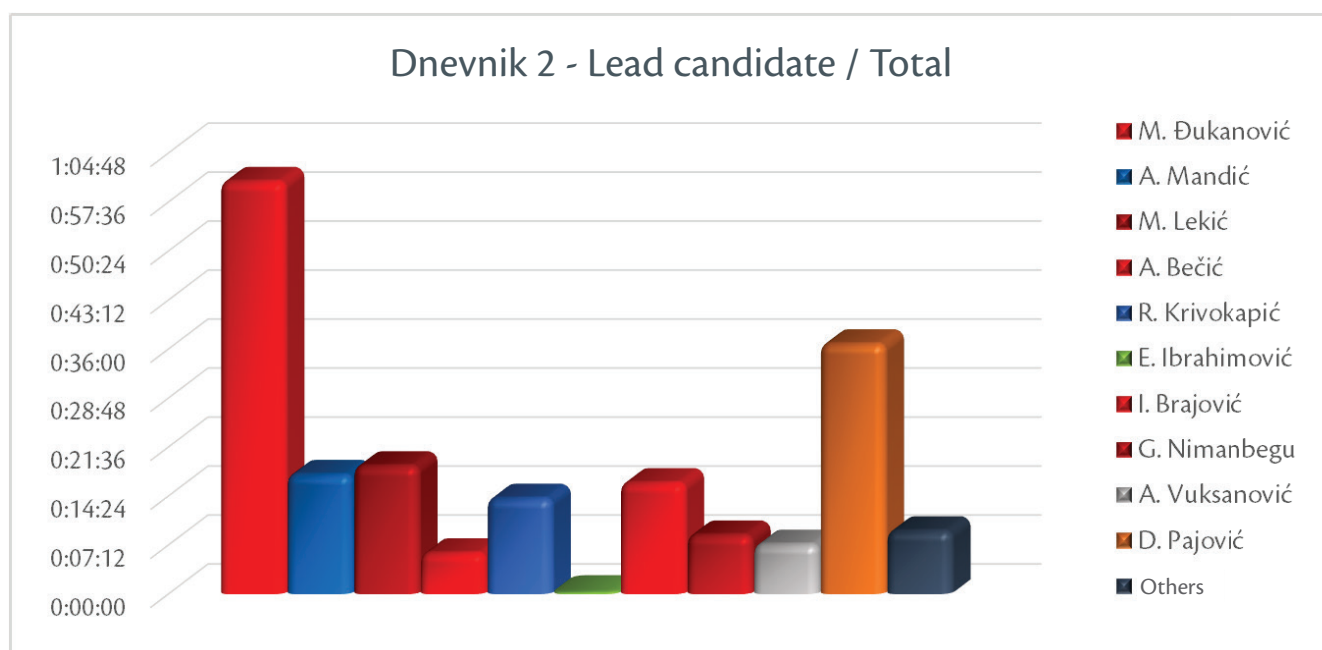


Figure 4. Time allocated to the candidate parties and coalitions in the Election Block



The lead candidates of the parties and coalitions running in the October 2016 elections dominated the media representation of their parties. Out of the total time dedicated to the parties and candidates for the Parliament in *Dnevnik 2*, president of DPS Milo Đukanović took up by far the largest amount of time (01:00:39), again due to the fact that in this period he was also the head of the Government. The same was true of the second most frequently featured politician, Darko Pajović (00:36:47), the former president of Positive Montenegro and the party's lead candidate in the October elections, who was at the time the Speaker of the Parliament of Montenegro. Much less time was occupied by the representatives of the opposition: the leader of the Coalition Key Miodrag Lekić (00:18:51), lead candidate of DF Andrija Mandić (00:17:35), as well as by the lead candidate of the smaller governing party Social Democrats Ivan Brajović (00:16:22). The least frequently featured lead candidates were Aleksa Bečić, president of Democrats (00:06:04), six times less than, for instance, president of Positive Montenegro Darko Pajović, and Ervih Ibrahimović of the Bosniak Party (00:00:24).



Graph 5. Total time allocated to the lead candidates of the running parties and coalitions



Within the Election Block segment of *Dnevnik 2*, the lead candidate of DPS Milo Đukanović again received the most coverage (00:21:39), followed by the leader of Key, Miodrag Lekić (00:18:51), Darko Pajović (00:14:46) and Ranko Krivokapić (00:14:05). Of the candidates that won at least one parliamentary seat, the least represented in the Election Block was Ervin Ibrahimović, with only 24 seconds of footage. Rafet Husović, president of the BS party, but not the head of its list, had slightly more time – one minute and 17 seconds, within the Election Block of *Dnevnik 2*.

We must, however, again stress that the Election Block mostly featured the materials submitted by the parties and coalitions and only broadcasted by TVCG. The results of our analysis therefore also reflect the extent of centralization of the Montenegrin parties, most of which chose to focus the majority of their media message on the lead candidate. This was especially true of DPS, but to a greater or lesser extent also of the other parties, with a partial exception of the Democrats.

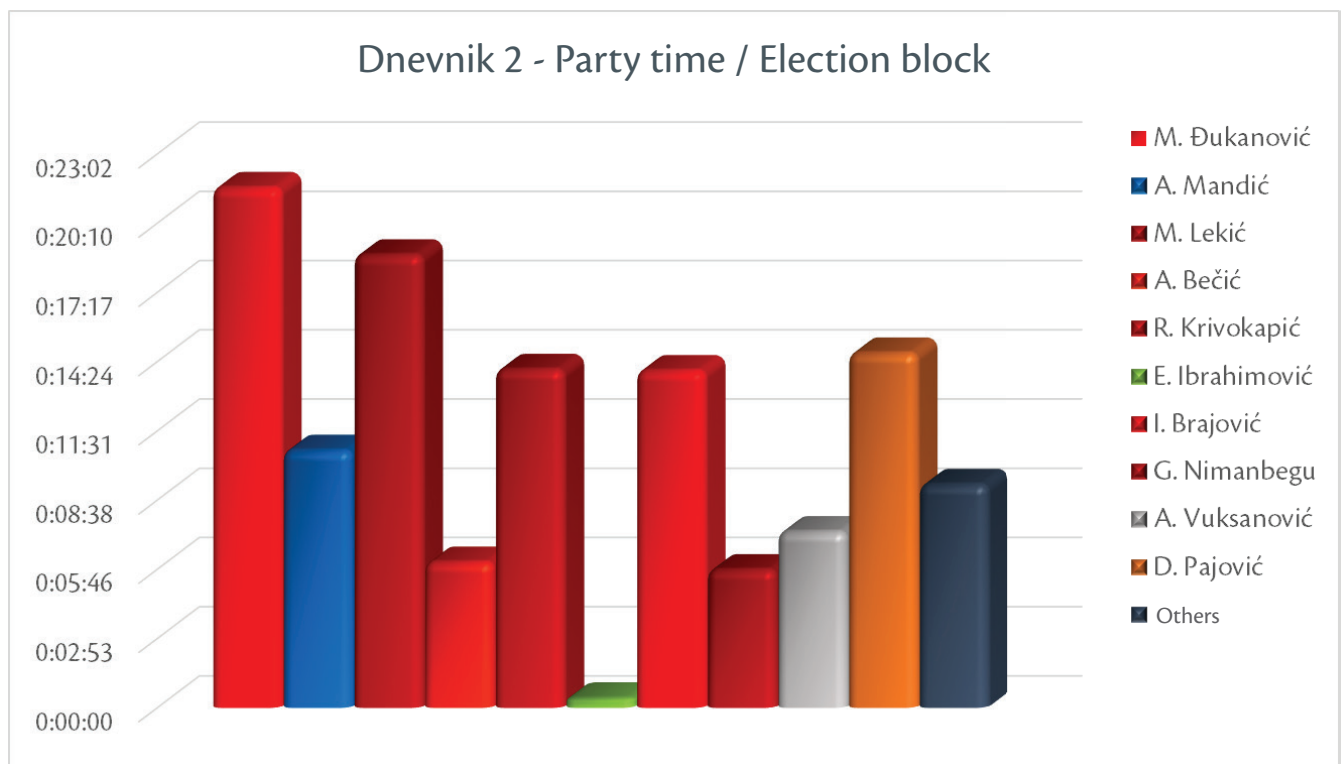


Figure 6. Time dedicated to the lead candidates in the Election Block



Interview

As a special pre-election programme, TVCG broadcasted 17 interviews from 27 September to 14 October 2016 with the heads/representatives of parties and coalitions running for the elections. The scheduled duration of the interviews was 60 minutes, and that timeframe was generally respected, with small exceptions. The only significant discrepancy was in the interview with the lead candidate of CCI, Adrijan Vuksanović, whose interview from 4 October 2016 lasted 45 minutes and 24 seconds, about 15 minutes less than those with other candidates. Journalist Jelena Otašević both edited and hosted the show. This case was the only major irregularity within the programme, at the expense of the CCI's representative.

The form of the interview was identical for all party representatives: the interviews were divided into six thematic blocks of 10 minutes each, concerning the following subjects:

- Internal policy;
- Foreign policy;
- Economy;
- Tourism and agriculture;
- Health and welfare;
- Education.

The above-mentioned journalist Jelena Otašević also shortened the segment on the internal policy in her interview with Milo Đukanović of DPS, giving him more time to talk about the foreign policy issues (Interview, 1 October). The same was true of the interview with Ivan Brajović, leader of the list of Social Democrats (Interview, 12 October), where the host Ivana Šebek reduced the length of the internal policy segment and gave more time to economic subjects. These examples can serve as indicators of slightly different treatment compared to the other interviewees, as it gave them more space to discuss the strongest points of their campaigns.

In his interview on 6 October, Miodrag Lekić strayed from the previously agreed subjects, and was fairly reprimanded by the journalist Ratka Pavlović. The same happened in an interview with Andrija Mandić, also hosted by Ratka Pavlović, in which she had to warn her interviewee several times that he was not allowed to denounce people for crimes that have not been confirmed during his appearance on the public service. At the same time, she was more direct in questioning these two interviewees than in other cases. Among other, she asked Mandić about the suspicions raised by other political actors that DF was being financed from abroad.

Overall, however, the CCE did not find more significant violations of the journalists' principles of balanced reporting, except in the aforementioned example with CCI.

Out of 17 interviews, four were hosted by the journalist Ratka Pavlović (Key, DF, BDC, PSR), four by Nevenka Ćirović (SDP, Alternative, Democrats, Serbian Party), and three each by Ivana Šebek (Positive, BP SD), and Jelena Otašević (DPS, CCI, Party of pensioners, disabled persons and social justice) and Musa Gjoka (Albanians decisively, Albanian coalition with one goal and Democratic alliance of Albanians).



Debates – parliamentary elections

Seven debates were organised ahead of the parliamentary elections between 26 September and 13 October 2016. All of them were edited and hosted by journalist Zoran Leković. Debates with representatives of every election list were organised on the following subjects:

- Political priorities;
- Fight against corruption and organised crime;
- Foreign policy;
- Economy;
- Health and welfare;
- Living standards;
- Final confrontation.

For each debate issue party representatives had two rounds of presentation, two rounds of comments and the final address. The duration varied from one debate to another, depending on the participants' eagerness to comment on the participants' words. The shortest debate was on the subject of health and welfare (5 October), which lasted one hour, 57 minutes and 25 seconds. The longest was on the subject of foreign policy (30 September), in the duration of two hours, 44 minutes and 12 seconds.

The biggest incident during the debate programme took place in the first debate, on 26 September, when the DF candidate Marko Milačić gave handcuffs to the representative of DPS Marta Šćepanović during his final address, to pass them on to the president of DPS Milo Đukanović, alluding to the criminal allegedly criminal character of her party and its leader.²⁸ DPS protested immediately after the debate, asking the Council of RTCG and its management to take a clear stance "on the incident scandal that occurred on the public service during yesterday's show *Debate*, when the host Vukoman Leković allowed representative of DF to turn the RTCG's the studio into a pub brawl, contrary to the rules of debate, and a scene for one of their senseless performances. We urge the Council of RTCG and the management of public broadcaster to take a firm stand on this degradation of their house and declare what measures it will take in response."²⁹ In his letter³⁰ to political director of DPS Tarzan Milošević, president of the Council of RTCG Vladimir Pavićević said that "RTCG has the duty to respect the freedom of expression of every political subject in Montenegro, but also to protect the reputation, dignity and safety of all candidates participating in the election campaign". "On behalf of the Council of RTCG, I apologise to the representative of your party, Ms. Marta Šćepanović, for the unpleasantness she experienced during the show *Debate*. We hope that the Montenegrin public

²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5xiDFXcsQM>

²⁹ <http://www.rtcg.me/izbori2016/saopstenja/142560/studio-tvcg-pretvoren-u-ulicu.html>

³⁰ <http://www.rtcg.me/izbori2016/saopstenja/142610/rtcg-nece-dozvoliti-zloupotrebe.html>



recognised that RTCG in no way contributed to the unpleasant situation that occurred during the show. RTCG shall endeavour to ensure that all participants in our shows respect the rules, and it will not allow abuses of the media time on the public service. CCE identified this as the only example of disrespect of journalists' standards, at the expense of DPS.

During the debates, the participants expressed some disagreements over the rules of the show. Many failed to observe the set rules and exceeded the time allocated for their contributions, but that happened equally with the representatives of the government and the opposition. The most regular in that regard was the debate on the state of the economy, which was held on 3 October 2016. On 5 October, during the debate on health and welfare, there was a disagreement between journalist Leković and the representative of BDC Aida Zoronjić, who wanted to speak about the hijab, whereas Leković considered the topic to be irrelevant to the theme of the debate. However, the BDC's representative insisted, claiming it was directly relevant to the debate, and was subsequently allowed to continue. During the final confrontation on 13 October 2016, journalist Leković stopped the participants from mentioning persons who were not present in the debate, in relation to the comments of the DF representative Milan Knežević on the subject of organised crime.

The CCE found no other violations of the journalists' principle of impartiality and balance. At the same time, it was clear that this form of debate, deprived of any form of editorial intervention, can appear monotone and tiresome to the viewers, given the strict observance of the time limits, as required by the RTCG's rules.



Debates – local elections

From 3 to 12 October 2016 four debates were organised on RTCG, one for each of the local elections: on 3 October (Andrijevica), 5 October (Budva), 10 October (Gusinje), and 12 October (Kotor). The elections themselves took place on 16 October, alongside the national parliamentary elections. Each debate was broadcasted in the afternoon hours, and all were edited and hosted by journalist Saša Klikovac.

For each debate the party representatives had two rounds of presentations, two rounds of comments and the final address. The duration of the debates varied from one to another, depending on the participants' eagerness to respond to their counterparts, as well as on the number of participants in each elections. The shortest was the debate on the local elections in Andrijevica, which lasted just one hour, 29 minutes and 26 seconds. The longest was the debate ahead of the elections in Kotor, lasting in total two hours, 14 minutes and 59 seconds.

Debates for local elections were the only pre-election programme on TVCG in which the CCE did not find a single violation of basic journalistic principles. Journalist Klikovac led all debates very professionally. Smaller discrepancies observed in the course of the debates are a natural consequence of live debates and of inflammatory pre-election rhetoric, and are entirely acceptable in debate-based shows.



Zaključci i preporuke

- The analysis of *Dnevnik 2*, which was the focal point of the CCE's research, revealed that DPS received by far the most time on RTCG out of the total time allocated to the party lists and candidates for MPs (01:58:39), mostly thanks to the fact that its candidates for the Parliament were also persons in high government offices. The second most represented was the Grand Coalition Key (01:14:09), with more than a half an hour more than the strongest oppositional party DF, primarily because of the Key's minister Goran Danilović who often appeared on *Dnevnik 2*. These were followed by the Social Democrats (00:45:29), also thanks to their representatives in the government, DF (00:39:49), Positive Montenegro (00:38:48), SDP (00:32:02) and Democrats (00:31:20). The least represented parties on *Dnevnik 2* among those who won at least one seat in the Parliament were the minority parties and coalitions – CCI (00:11:40), Bosniak Party (00:10:26) and the coalition „Albanians decisively“ (00:08:41). In spite of some improvements in the pre-election period, these findings still reveal indirect preferential treatment of the ruling parties. This is not in line with the mission of TVCG as a public broadcaster, whose aim should be to act as a source of information for all citizens regardless of their political affiliation.
- The disproportion in the representation of electoral actors on *Dnevnik 2* is enormous, primarily because of the fact that the candidates for MPs of the ruling parties are also the officials in the government. The CCE believes that the editorial board should carefully reconsider its reporting on such persons in the pre-election period, as this can easily turn into promotional reporting for the ruling parties. This is especially important as numerous events have been scheduled by the government to coincide with the pre-election period, but this strategy received no criticism at RTCG. For instance, Prime Minister Đukanović did not pay a single visit to the miners in the previous two years, but just before the elections he visited the shaft only to extend his congratulations to the management and employees. This is a clear example of covert political marketing for the ruling party. The price per second of political and economic marketing on RTCG is not the same, and considering that *Dnevnik 2* is broadcasted in the prime time when the majority of viewers are watching TV, such reports represent a major favour to the authorities by the public broadcaster.
- Opposition' representatives in the Government of electoral trust did not receive the same favourable treatment as their colleagues from DPS, Social Democrats and Positive Montenegro. Specifically, the Minister of Finances and SPD's candidate for the Parliament did not appear once on RTCG, except in the Election Block. Meanwhile, we noted three instances of unbalanced reporting on the activities of the Minister of Interior and candidate for the Parliament of the coalition Key, Goran Danilović, a possible indicator of editorial bias on the part of *Dnevnik 2*. It is encouraging, however, that critical coverage was outweighed by neutral reporting on Danilović's activities.
- We also noted instances of partial refusal to broadcast material from DF's rallies, which the RTCG justified by its refusal to broadcast footage that was dominated by insulting language. A video submitted by Democrats was also originally rejected, but later broadcasted after the decision of the Council of RTCG and Agency for electronic media. Such examples indicate the need for



adoption of clear and uniform rules in order to avoid similar conflicts in the future.

- The Decision of the Council of RTCG to issue an apology to a DPS candidate for Parliament, Marta Šćepanović, for the behaviour of another participant in the debate, i.e. for the incident when she was given handcuffs by the representative of DF Marko Milačić, is a positive example.
- CCE believes that the current format of the debate programme, without any editorial intervention, can be tiresome and monotone for the viewers, given the strict adherence to the timeframes set by the RTCG rules, and without any opportunity for the hosts to go into more depth through additional questions that may crop up in the course of the debate. CCE recommends that RTCG should consider the model already used by Radio Television Serbia (RTS) during the latest parliamentary elections in Serbia. There all legal and internally adopted rules on candidate representation were implemented on the Channel 2 of the Serbian public service, while interactive debates with representatives of the strongest candidate parties were broadcasted on the first channel. At the same time, Channel 1 frequently advised the audience that all the regular reporting was implemented on the Channel 2, and that this form of reporting was the consequence of the editorial policy. RTS not increased its popularity, but the entire public had the opportunity to really see the programme offers of the competing parties. Of course, this would imply the strengthening of capacities of the news desk of RTCG to ensure a professional and balanced communication with all actors.
- The most balanced and the brightest example of pre-election reporting the CCE recorded were the debates for local elections during which journalist Saša Klikovac hosted all four shows professionally and in line with the rules.

Finally, despite the above mentioned shortcomings, there was a marked progress in the pre-election reporting of the public broadcaster, which could be the result of changes in the editorial board just before the elections, or of the fact that RTCG received expert assistance in this period from Tomislav Špoljar of the Croatian Radio and Television (HRT).



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