

# Analysis of the News Programme of the Public Media Service RTCG

August and September 2025



Kingdom of the Netherlands



Centar za građansko obrazovanje  
Centre for Civic Education

# Summary

Analysis of the Central News Programmes of the Public Media Service RTCG – *Dnevnik 2* – for August and September 2025 shows a high level of quantitative content production, but a series of structural and professional weaknesses in reporting. A total of 61 editions of this programme were broadcast in the 7:30 PM slot, with an average duration of around 29 minutes. The content was dominated by news items, statements, and press releases, compared to authored, analytical, and investigative formats.<sup>1</sup>

RTCG consistently reported primarily on daily events, usually initiated by government institutions or organized events, without deeper contextualization. Journalistic initiative, although present, was mostly focused on “lighter” topics – human interest stories, agriculture, and sports – while issues of significant political, social, and democratic importance remained marginal or superficially covered.

Both months revealed a pattern of reliance on official sources, lack of critical examination of statements by authorities, selective placement of news within the programme, and fragmented reporting of the same event across multiple unconnected segments.

## Key Findings

- **Dominance of News and Statements over Analysis**

In both months, RTCG predominantly broadcast processed press releases and statements, with significantly fewer authored reports, interviews, and thematic segments. A neutral tone, statistically the most represented, largely results from mere transmission of information without context, rather than from balanced and critical journalism. This approach indicates that reporting mostly remains at the level of relaying information, without broader contextualization or deeper processing of topics.

For example, in *Dnevnik* of 27 August, the public was informed that the European Commission approved the first tranche of payments from the Reform and Growth Fund. This was presented at the news level, without context, deeper analysis, or review of the percentage of tasks fulfilled from the Reform Agenda related to the withdrawal of funds from this Fund.

Similarly, the protest of nurses and technicians on 18 September was first presented as news containing only the information about the protest, and then, in the next segment, the position of the Ministry of Health was broadcast.

Furthermore, when reporting on the dismissal of MANS’s criminal charges against former Prime Minister and President Milo Đukanović, in the case known as “Telekom,” on 23 September, RTCG, through three segments, provided information, party reactions, and the stance of the Supreme State Prosecutor’s Office. At the same time, the news included the Prosecutor’s decision to abandon criminal proceedings against Nikšić Mayor Marko Kovačević, in which he was accused of inciting national and religious hatred due to a speech in Grahovo. The same applies to the 25 September report on the Government’s decision granting the status of a prominent cultural creator, which awarded this status to Milutin Mićović, a negator of Montenegrins and the Montenegrin nation, which caused considerable public reactions, but did not receive due attention from RTCG.

With such handling and broadcasting of content, RTCG resembles more an agency that supplies the public with decontextualized information, rather than, as a publicly funded service, providing an analytical overview of current events and, consequently, complete information.

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<sup>1</sup> A total of 514 news items, statements, and/or press releases were broadcast, along with 135 authored reports, 26 interviews, 336 thematic/investigative segments, 9 reports, and one piece classified in the “other” category.

- **Favoring institutional and official narratives**

The executive branch, police, local governments, and other state bodies are the most frequent sources and subjects of reporting. Critical voices - opposition, NGOs, independent experts, and civic initiative - receive less space or appear later, often in separate and shorter segments, with a noticeable trend of selectivity in their choice.

RTCG failed to address the Prime Minister's comment from 8 September, when asked about the search for a monument to Chetnik commander Pavle Đurišić. Spajić stated that his focus was on European integration, not "village topics," which many other media and social actors did cover.

Supporting the thesis that RTCG does not insist on answers and does not ask difficult questions of authority holders is the interview with Interior Minister Danilo Šaranović, broadcast on 24 September after a double murder in the village of Ugnji near Cetinje. The minister spoke for 653 seconds, while the security situation was mentioned only at the start of the conversation. His statements about successes and proper conduct were not followed by any critical questions, nor were questions asked about the number of security-interest individuals in Cetinje, or about frequent criminal clashes, which were intensifying at that time.

A similar example occurred during the reporting of statements by Deputy Prime Minister Momo Koprivica on 4 August regarding the seizure of tobacco in the Bar free zone. Although undeniably important, RTCG covered it exclusively at the level of official statements, ignoring information from other media and sources that criticized the authorities' role in addressing this issue.

That RTCG favors certain sides is also demonstrated by the biased approach shown after reactions from a group of NGOs and civic activists to statements made in the programme *Naglas*, in which the guest was Aleksandar Stamatović. The news that they had addressed the RTCG Ombudsman received 66 seconds in *Dnevnik*, whereas, on the other hand, in a separate report, the editorial response was given twice as much airtime - 129 seconds.

- **Pseudo-events and promotional content**

A continuously high number of pseudo-events was recorded, referring to official visits, municipal day celebrations, conferences, and statements in which authority holders promote their work without journalistic questioning or confrontation with opposing data and opinions.

## **Pavle Đurišić Monument – Missed Questions and Uncritical Framing**

RTCG reported on one of the key events in August - the erecting, relocation and search for the monument to the infamous Chetnik commander Pavlo Đurišić. Although the public service covered the event on the ground, the reporting missed key issues, including the role of religious officials, the actions of the police and the prosecution, as well as the possible implications of the Basic Agreement between Montenegro and the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC). Certain aspects of the Basic Agreement were mentioned through the statements of a historian, and later a lawyer, but the RTCG did not directly address the issue to the competent institutions.

In the first report on 7 August, RTCG showed a positive attitude toward the authorities' actions, while criticizing the act of placing the monument itself. In the 9 August report, statements of Metropolitan Joanikije were broadcast without critical questioning of the expressed views. The segment included a citizen survey in which one respondent spoke about "reconciliation of all victims," framing the narrative through the thesis of a fratricidal war and indirectly equating the Chetnik and Partisan movements, while neglecting historical facts and the antifascist heritage. At the same time, information of public interest, such as claims that residents guarded the monument during the night, was omitted.

In the following days, RTCG covered this topic almost exclusively through short news segments, while questions of responsibility of the competent authorities and legal dilemmas remained unaddressed.

It is important to point out that the views of civil society, which were conveyed by almost all other media, were not given space in the reports of the Public Service. This also applies to the reactions of non-governmental organizations regarding the attack on photojournalists during the unveiling of the monument in Berane.

From the event itself until the end of the month, RTCG did not deal with this topic in substance but instead focused on service news about the arrest and detention of the suspects.

It was only on August 29 that a feature was broadcast with lawyers - Miloš Vukčević and Dalibor Kavarić, who offered conflicting interpretations of the provisions of the Fundamental Treaty and its relationship to the Constitution. However, the RTCG did not verify these claims with the police or other competent institutions, nor did it question the position that the police cannot enter the monastery without the approval of church authorities. This missed an opportunity to open an important public debate, which, in that period, was dealt with by numerous other media. It is particularly problematic that, in the report, lawyer Kavarić describes Đurišić as a figure who "deserves the respect and attention of certain national, ethnic and other social groups," while RTCG does not challenge this claim in a single sentence, nor does it mention that he was a collaborator with the occupiers during the Second World War, responsible for mass crimes against the civilian population.

During August and September, the largest number of pseudo-events was broadcast through statements by Minister of Tourism Simonida Kordić, who spoke positively about the tourist season. Although RTCG also broadcast segments highlighting low occupancy of accommodation capacities or poor road infrastructure, such data should necessarily have been part of reports where authority holders presented their work positively in that context.

Pseudo-events also appeared in broadcasting information about official trips of ministers, mainly of the Deputy PM for foreign and European affairs Filip Ivanović, as well as pieces about the celebration of certain municipal days. These occasions could have been good opportunities to question and contextualize the performance of these trips or local authorities, but RTCG consistently failed to do so. For example, in the 5 August segment about the celebration of Gusinje Municipality Day, only statements from local authority representatives praising themselves were broadcast.

- **Agenda-setting and selective news positioning**

In both monitored months, RTCG showed a clear editorial influence by positioning important social topics in the second half of Dnevnik or reducing them to short news, while certain political narratives and reactions of the authorities received disproportionately more time.

RTCG demonstrated how the agenda is set by positioning the report on the events of the Kotor Carnival on 3 August. Although it caused a lot of public attention and was one of the main news items of other media, RTCG gave the report about this event as the last one in Dnevnik - and with the omission of key information. Specifically, the public media service report does not mention in any part that the incident that happened, according to the citizens, was caused by satire at the expense of Minister Slaven Radunović and his statement that the citizens of Kotor should vote on the UNESCO status of that city in a referendum.

The piece about the third anniversary of the first mass murder in Cetinje, on 12 August, was broadcast only in the 20th minute of the news. Although forest fires affecting the country were current at the time, it should be noted that reports on global fire situations preceded this information. Such positioning of news indicates questionable editorial judgment and is unacceptable from a professional standpoint, especially considering the ongoing protests by victims' families and their demands of authorities. RTCG also broadcasted exclusively a reporting segment, failing to ask authorities for answers to family demands or calls for accountability.

This way of positioning the news indicates that through editorial decisions, RTCG expresses its intention to actively shape the public agenda, suppressing topics of expressed public interest and reducing the space for critical questioning of the responsibilities of the authorities.

- **One-sidedness and violation of professional standards**

The common practice to have pieces with a single interlocutor is noted, and usually representing the official side, packaging interviews into reports, and "splitting" a single event into multiple pieces. Instead of consolidated and complete information, the public is offered fragmented news, which deviates from professional journalism standards, according to which an event should be presented through a single content piece.

An example of "packaging" interviews can be found in the 2 August news piece, when a segment was broadcast consisting of statements from Podgorica Mayor Saša Mujović.

### **Agenda and Relationship with the Authorities – News Positioning on the Example of the Cetinje Mass Murder Anniversary**

The way of setting the agenda is also visible in the coverage of the anniversary of the first mass murder in Cetinje. On the day marking three years since that event, RTCG only released this information in the 20th minute of the central Dnevnik. Even though the fires in Montenegro were a dominant topic at the time, even news about fires in the world received priority, while the story of this tragedy only came later.

Such an editorial decision is problematic considering the ongoing protests of victims' families and their demands of the authorities. Although a reporting segment was broadcast, RTCG did not ask questions about institutional accountability nor requested the authorities' stance regarding the families' demands.

Additionally, in the interview with Interior Minister Danilo Šaranović, broadcast a month and a half later, and whose resignation had been demanded by the Cetinje victims' families, no question about this was posed, nor about the law intended to establish more effective control of firearms in Montenegro, whose adoption had been promised at the beginning of 2025.

This approach demonstrates a lack of critical attitude toward authority holders and absence of insistence on answers to issues of public interest.

Uneven space for the opposing parties was also observed, especially in topics concerning RTCG and its management. For example, the report broadcast on 4 August in which the activities of the police in combating prostitution are analyzed with one interlocutor, an official of the Police Administration, who was not opposed by other views.

## Reporting on RTCG through visible imbalance

Imbalance in reporting is particularly evident in the segments covering the court proceedings against the president and members of the RTCG Council for abuse of official position. The first report aired on 19 September, when closing statements were delivered at the Basic Court in Podgorica. Almost the entire segment consisted of statements from Council members and defense lawyers, while the prosecution was given only 10 seconds. A similar approach was observed on 23 September, when some Council members were found guilty. The segment included only a statement from the defense lawyer, without a detailed explanation of the verdict or the context of the proceedings. After that, a reaction from the general director, Boris Raonić, was also aired. The following day, when the Judicial Council responded to criticisms regarding the verdict, the institution was given 42 seconds of airtime, while Raonić's reaction lasted 72 seconds.

The impression that RTCG reports in favor of its management is further reinforced by the coverage of a protest by a portion of employees supporting this management, demanding adoption of a collective agreement, which they claim guarantees higher salaries. Numerically, the coverage of the protest lasted 178 seconds, while the general director received an additional 44 seconds, and the reaction of the opposing union only 33 seconds.

Comparing the airtime and structure of the segments indicates a reporting pattern that favors management's views, while court rulings and the positions of some employees remain underrepresented.

### • Gender and social inequality

In both monitored months, men appeared as interlocutors about three times more than women. When women appeared, they were predominantly linked to social topics.

Reporting on youth, pensioners, the unemployed, and vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities and the LGBTIQ community, was almost entirely absent.

### • Inadequate handling of sensitive topics

The analysis recorded violations of privacy, particularly in femicide cases, and irresponsible handling of historical and identity-related topics, where contextualization and protection of antifascist and constitutional values were missing.

During August, RTCG continuously violated privacy rights while reporting on femicide cases. In the first report broadcast on 5 August, full names of the victim and perpetrator were given, along with the number of children and mention that the victim was beaten in the presence of a minor child. RTCG thus acted contrary to the recommendations of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), further endangering the family and disregarding children's well-being.

Furthermore, in the report broadcast on 25 August, RTCG made a report about the largest discovered marijuana plantation in Montenegro, with the reporter showing marijuana stables and walking around the plantation. In this way, RTCG practically carried out the advertising of drugs and intoxicating substances.

### • Elements of good journalistic practice

At the same time, it should be pointed out that RTCG has demonstrated good reporting practices in certain situations. This especially refers to the continuous monitoring of the fire during the summer, when journalists reported from the field, from different locations and included various interlocutors – from members of the protection and rescue services to local residents, citizens and volunteers.

It is also positive that human interest stories and reportage segments about rural life, agriculture, natural resources, and citizens' personal successes are regularly broadcast. The analysis shows that journalistic initiative is more frequently used for such content, while it is significantly less present in topics related to political accountability, institutional action, or broader social context.

# Conclusion

The analysis of the central information show Dnevnik 2, during August and September 2025, indicates that RTCG in the observed period does not completely fulfill the role of public media service as a corrective to the authorities and a source of comprehensive, critical and socially responsible information. Although quantitatively productive and technically stable, Dnevnik's programme is characterized by a lack of media initiative, analyticalness and professional distance from the power holders.

RTCG's reporting is largely based on relaying information and statements, while content that offers deeper analysis, context and different perspectives is represented to a lesser extent. Although most of the reports were evaluated as neutral, such an approach often implies the absence of a critical step and additional journalistic processing of topics of public importance.

In a thematic sense, sports and political topics dominate, while numerous important social issues, including the position of vulnerable groups, are sporadically covered. Gender imbalance in source selection and fragmented reporting across multiple news segments for the same event is noticeable.

However, in certain situations, RTCG shows the potential for better reporting, especially through field work, continuous monitoring of important events and reportage content that brings social topics closer to the audience. In the following period, the strengthening of the analytical approach, greater variety of interlocutors and topics, as well as more consistent application of professional standards could contribute to a stronger role of RTCG in informing citizens and strengthening public interest. Namely, RTCG still mainly relies on official sources and ready-made information, rarely insists on answers and responsibility, and selectively treats topics of significant public interest. Such an approach undermines public trust in the long term, limits pluralism of opinion and weakens the democratic function of the Public Service.

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Without essential improvement of editorial policy, strengthening of investigative journalism and consistent application of professional standards, RTCG risks remaining a service of institutions and authorities, and not the citizens whom, according to its mission, it should primarily serve.

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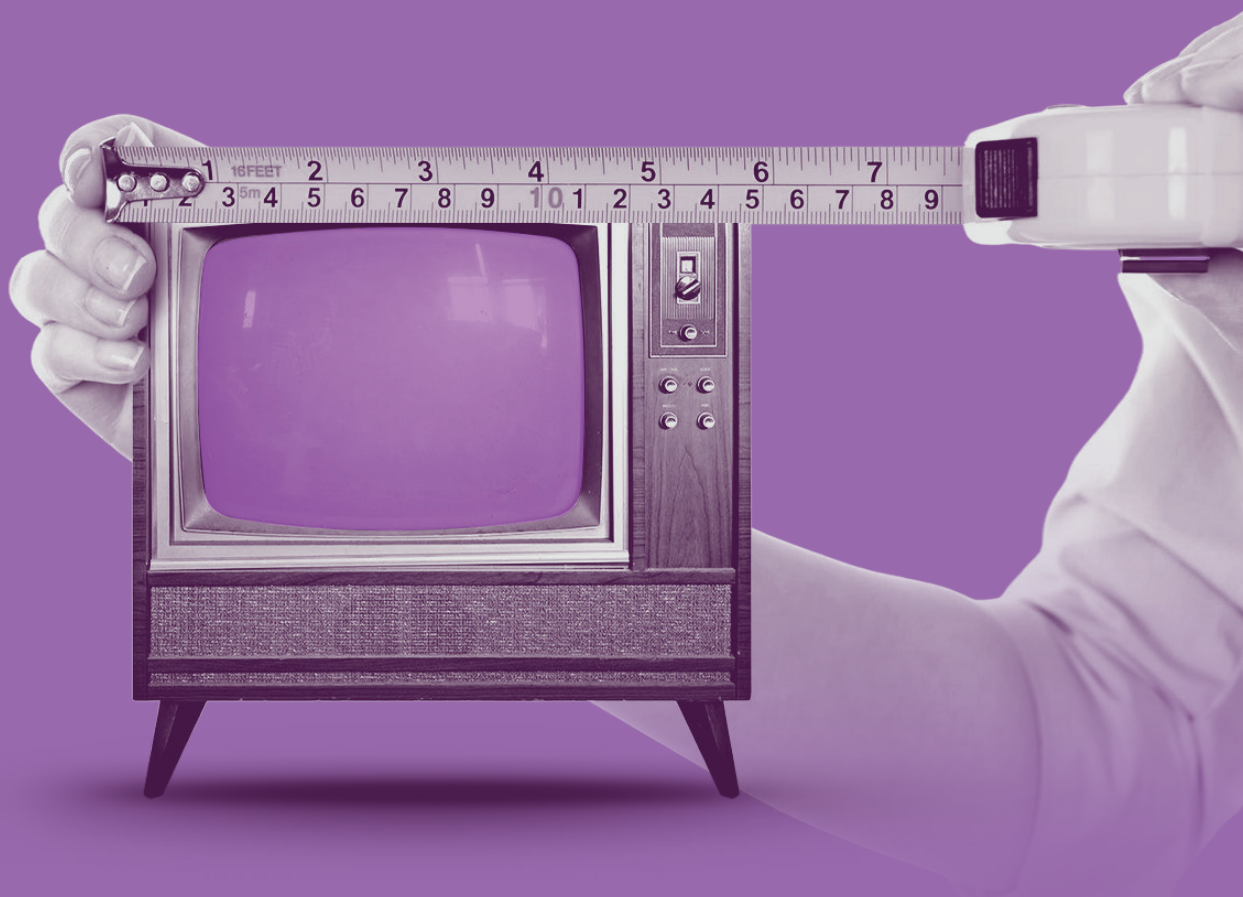
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