

Recommendations

To avoid problematic issues identified as a result of monitoring, media must observe standards of reporting about elections, which are established by the law, the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters, Charter of Journalistic Ethics and international documents:

- **Equal coverage.** It is important that political subjects running for elections have equal conditions and media outlets define and publish their standard by internal regulations, which will establish uniform attitude towards both qualified and unqualified political subjects and will not selectively ignore electoral activities of separate subjects.
- **Balance.** To fully inform voters, it is important for media to ensure variety of sources so as to provide audience with diverse perspectives about an issue. When reporting, media outlet should take into account wide spectrum of different parties, including ruling and opposition parties and their diverse perspectives. Generalizing an opinion of one opposition party as that of the entire opposition may be misleading if the issue in question does not concern only one opposition party and there is a diversity of views about the issue among the opposition parties.
- **Balance in online media.** Online editions must ensure balanced reporting within a single news item and not within the entire information flow.
- **Reporting government activities.** When reporting government activities, it is important to also provide alternative opinions and to observe balance in reports about government activities by showing a different perspective. Media should distinguish between what is related to government activities (and public concerns) or political propaganda.
- **Practice of financed content.** Media outlets must clearly separate financed content from editorial content in order to avoid misleading of audience. This standard must be applied to content financed by the government as well as political parties and all financed content should be known to the public.
- **Social media as a source.** It is unacceptable to use social media as a source without proper verification of the information, or for releasing such opinions which are used to attack someone.
- **Public opinion polls.** Media must properly assess the reliability of a public opinion poll and only after that take a decision on its publication. Media outlets must also observe the rules established for publication of pre-election opinion polls and publish all those details which are important for audience to assess the data comprehensively. It is unacceptable to use poll results for manipulating public opinion especially when the amount of undecided voters is high.
- **Gender sensitivity.** When selecting respondents media needs to be gender sensitive and by due representation of women respondents contribute to pluralism which also implies equality of women and men.
- **Hate speech.** Media must not avoid reporting hate speech of political subjects and public figures in order to inform audience about the values of respondents. However, at the same time, media must understand the threat of encouraging discrimination and must inform what type of speech the public deals with. Moreover, media should refrain from using hate speech of public figures in titles and announcements without noting what type of speech it is. Media should avoid reporting statements containing hate speech by non-public figures.