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Media-related legislation amendments

In September last year, changes were introduced into the way the Agency was financed. Namely, new law amendments abolishing the payment of a broadcasting fee entered into force. The funds that the Agency had been receiving as a portion of the collected broadcasting fee were substituted by funds from the state Budget.

In December 2017, the Government submitted a proposal to the Parliament for new amendments to the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (LAAVMS). In the course of the public debate, the Agency submitted several remarks, opposing the proposed personnel changes and the introduction of state budget funding, as these changes could make room for exertion of political influence over the regulator. In addition, the Agency had remarks about the proposals concerning original programme and music quotas; the production of documentary and feature programmes; the formulation of the provision concerning state institutions' advertising, etc. Nevertheless, these remarks have not been taken into consideration. The law has entered parliamentary procedure and is expected to be passed in the forthcoming period.

Media literacy

As part of its efforts for promoting media literacy, the Agency launched a new specialized website, www.mediumskapismenost.mk, which offers its visitors information about the related activities of the Agency and the Media Literacy Network, which currently includes 37 members.

The Network saw its first project, carried out by some of its members – a DVD intended for the primary schools around the Republic of Macedonia. The project was financed by the Agency and supported by the Bureau for the Development of Education and by the Ministry of Education, which disseminated copies of the DVD to all primary schools across the country. The DVD contains materials, video spots, the Convention on Children's Rights and a leaflet prepared by the Ombudsman's Office explaining children's rights, as well as the way in which these can be exercised. Disseminated to the primary schools along with the DVD, was the leaflet "[On Media Literacy](#)", which had been prepared by the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services. Using simple language, this leaflet provides answers to the questions: "What is media literacy?", "To whom is media literacy important?", "Why is media literacy important?", "Which media does media literacy refer to?" and "How to critically assess media contents".

These materials are to be used by the teaching staff when elaborating on topics related to the media. Their purpose is to teach students how to receive information, how to determine the latter's origin and build their critical approach to media contents.

Gender and media

The Agency continued to actively encourage social inclusion and gender equality. With the aim of drawing media's attention to the importance of recognizing gender issues, being informed about them, and breaking gender stereotypes, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services launched two publications about gender-related issues. The first publication compiles the results of five annual surveys on the presence and representation of gender

issues in the programmes of the national television stations in the period 2012-2016. Apart from the surveys, the publication also presents a meta-analysis showing the trends in terms of gender and the media. The second publication on gender issues in the television programmes covers the year 2017 and contains two analyses. One of the analyses shows whether, how and to what extent gender issues are present, while the other one depicts the way in which TV programmes portray gender. The researchers analysed the presence of gender issues in the programming concepts and contents of the daily information shows of the national TV stations, as well as the way women and men were depicted in the commercials. The research findings revealed a low level of presence of gender-related issues and topics in the daily news editions and showed that topics which could have been presented from a gender-related point of view were not recognized as such by either the male or the female journalists or the media outlets. Male high-office holders appeared in a larger number of news items within the daily news editions, most often as interlocutors, while the trend of using masculine grammatical gender as universal when introducing the professions and offices, continued. In general, media were neutral when addressing topics related to gender; however, one could notice a partially positive trend in the media outlets where female editors prevailed. As regards commercials, there was a certain visible balance in terms of the presence of male and female actors, whereas in terms of narration, male voices prevailed in both the domestic and the foreign ads.

Meanwhile, the Regulator also launched a campaign against sexism in the media, which is expected to raise the public and media workers' awareness about the importance of gender equality and about overcoming gender stereotypes and prejudices.

Discrimination and hate speech

In an attempt to contribute to preventing speech that stigmatizes LGBTI groups in the media, as well as to promote sexual and gender diversity, including protection of the rights of the LGBTI community, a Declaration for Ethical and Professional Reporting on LGBTI-related Issues was promoted. The signing of the document was initiated by the 'Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities' Coalition, the Council of Media Ethics, the Association of Journalists of the Republic of Macedonia and the Agency.

The above-mentioned document underlines the international reports and national research papers' conclusion that the prevalence of hate speech in certain media outlets encourages violence and perpetuation of discriminatory acts against this group and that, oftentimes, media fail to recognize discrimination and social exclusion of LGBTI people. The principles promoted by the Declaration urge the media to restrain from and condemn hate speech based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (AAVMS) organised a Conference dedicated to "Hate Speech in the Media". Launched at this event was a publication titled "Media Regulatory Authorities and Hate Speech", which conveys the experiences and practices of the regulators in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro. The Conference attendees discussed the stereotypes, discrimination and hate speech against Roma people and members of the LGBTI community. The President of the "Education and Media Development Centre for Young Roma – Association 24Vakti", Mr. Bajram Ramadan, presented the findings of the survey on how Macedonian media had been reporting on the Roma, contained in a publication titled "A Picture of the Roma: Hate Speech, Anti-Ziganism and the Media", while Mr. Slavco Dimitrov of the "Margini" Coalition presented the results of the survey of audience' standpoints regarding the depiction of LGBTI members in the radio and television programmes, which had resulted from the Coalition's cooperation with the Agency.

Surveys

The Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services prepared an analysis of all the measures it had taken up against the broadcasters, operators of public electronic communication networks and print media publishers in 2017, as well as the most frequent violations committed on their part in the same year. The analysis focuses, in particular, on the Agency's actions arising from its monitoring of the media coverage of the 2017 Local Elections. Compared to 2016, in 2017, the broadcasters, cable operators and print media publishers committed fewer violations against the Law on AAVMS and the regulations adopted thereof, the terms and obligations laid down in the licenses, and the Media Law. According to the Analysis, Article 92 of the AAVMU Law, which refers to broadcasters' obligations to broadcast programmes originally created in the Macedonian language or the minority languages in the Republic of Macedonia, is the one that was violated most frequently.

The Agency conducted a survey of the opinions of the audience in the Republic of Macedonia, with the aim of obtaining data about how it used the media; about its attitudes and habits regarding television and radio programmes; the way in which young people were presented in the media, and the topics of relevance to them, as well as its opinions about the way media depicted homosexuality.

As part of its legal obligations, the Agency conducted two more surveys about the radio stations' reach and television stations' share in the total viewership in the Republic of Macedonia. The first survey covers the year 2017, while the second one presents data regarding the first quarter of 2018.