



**AGENCY FOR AUDIO AND AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA SERVICES  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA**

**COUNTRY REPORT, REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA  
(October 2019 – November 2020)**

**1. AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW ON AAVMS**

- **By-laws regulating the work of the operators of public electronic communication networks**

Following a previously conducted public hearing, on 4 June 2020, the Agency's Council adopted by-laws regulating the implementation of Article 143 of the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services. Pursuant to this Article, upon registering a programme package, the responsible person of the operator of the public electronic communication network and the responsible person of the broadcaster shall submit statements certifying that the TV rights of the foreign broadcaster to be retransmitted have been regulated for the territory of RN Macedonia. In case of retransmission of any portion of the programme service of a broadcaster from another country the rights for which have not been regulated, the entire responsibility falls on the operator retransmitting it and on the broadcaster.

On 22 June 2020, the Government of RN Macedonia adopted a Decree with the Force of Law, pursuant to which the implementation of Article 143 was postponed for 150 days. On 3 November 2020, the Government adopted the Proposal to Amend and Supplement the Law on AAVMS, which proposes an amendment to Article 143 of the LAAVMS, due to the fact that author's rights are regulated by the Law on Author's and Related Rights, and recommended to the

Agency to delay the implementation of the bylaws until the adoption of the amendments and supplements proposed. Considering this, and bearing in mind the citizens' interest, the Agency decided to postpone the implementation of the by-laws for 30 days.

## **2. GENDER IN THE MEDIA**

In April 2020, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services published its annual survey on gender in the media. This year, for the first time in the country, the survey presented both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the treatment of gender in children's programmes. The analysis covers 520 children's shows, of both domestic and foreign production, broadcasted in the period from 15 September until 15 October 2019, by seven national terrestrial television stations. The gender analysis was performed on 4,553 characters, of whom 2,657 were female, 1,842 were male, while the remaining characters had no gender markers (e.g. animals). In general, the study showed that most television stations did not have a well-thought-through concept of how and in which way – or through which programmes – to address children, and did not care about cultivating their future audiences from an early age.

In September 2020, the Agency published an analysis titled "Gender in Television and Radio: Who Makes the Decisions and Who Implements Them?". The Analysis covered the gender structure of ownership and of the employees of the radio and television stations. It offers data on the ownership structure of television and radio stations in 2019, as well as data on the structure of employees in the television and radio stations in 2018, including comparative data taking into account the previous years. The data provided by this analysis, which was conducted by the Agency, indicate that women are less represented in the ownership structure of the television and radio stations. A total of 68 broadcasters, of which 28 are television and 40 are radio stations, are

completely owned by men, whereas 23 broadcasters, i.e. 3 television stations and 20 radio stations, are completely owned by women.

### **3. MEDIA LITERACY**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Media Literacy Days – MLD 2020 – were held in the period from 26 October until 2 November 2020. With this event, our country joined in the marking of UNESCO’s Global Week on Media and Information Literacy (24-31 October 2020), for the second time. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, all events were fully organized and conducted on the Internet. In the context of UNESCO’s call to all citizens to counter disinformation using media literacy as a powerful tool, this year’s motto of the MLD 2020 was “Test Every News with No Excuse”. A number of workshops, debates, webinars and other online events were held as part of this year’s MLD 2020, focusing on various aspects of media literacy. A special emphasis was placed on the fight against disinformation, i.e. on recognizing fake news and disinformation, lies and conspiracy theories related to Covid-19, as well as on the need to raise awareness about media literacy. Many of this year’s activities were directed at the students and the teachers, in the context of the need to raise awareness about media literacy among the youngest population, and the latter’s integration into the educational process.

### **4. ANALYSES, SURVEYS AND PUBLICATIONS**

- **Study – Determining the Impact of New Media on Shaping Public Opinion and on the Work of Traditional Media**

During the reporting period, the Agency published a study titled “[The Impact of New Media on Shaping Public Opinion and on the Work of Traditional Media](#)”. The collected data indicated that, during the last decade, digital communication technologies and the Internet had dramatically changed the habits of the audience concerning the use of media content. The increased Internet access

and the possession of smart phones and other digital devices has allowed the audience to find a variety of digital content and communicate via the social networks or chat applications at any time and from any location. This is especially true about the younger population, which most often uses media content from a number of different sources, “on demand” and in a customized fashion.

If one looks at the audience as a whole, television in the RN Macedonia is still used mostly for watching various content, but the Internet is catching up. When it comes to the younger age groups, the Internet is even taking precedence over television, and this trend is likely to continue in the future. As regards providing information on the domestic developments, at the level of the entire audience, television and the Internet are equally used in terms of use frequency. The radio and the print media are used far less often as sources of information.

- **Study - Pluralism of Media Ownership in the New Media Environment**

A study on “Pluralism of Media Ownership in the New Media Environment” was prepared for the needs of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, within the frameworks of the second stage of the JUFREX project on “Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Media in North Macedonia”, the joint programme of the European Union and the Council of Europe titled “Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey 2019-2022”. The study aims to assess the current legal provisions concerning ownership concentration in the audiovisual sector, and to recommend future policy steps. As a result, amendments and supplements to the Law on Media – and the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services in particular – are possible, given that the existing regulation on media ownership concentration is outdated, while these issues are gaining new meaning in the context of digital technologies, convergence, the spread of new Internet media and the market and audience fragmentation.

The study is available at the following link: [Pluralism of Media Ownership in the New Media Environment \(2020\)](#)

## **5. PROVIDING ACCESS TO MEDIA FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

In January 2020, the Council of Europe and the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services held a workshop for the broadcasters and the providers of on-demand audiovisual media services, aimed at developing a self-regulating document that would provide better access to media for persons with sensory disabilities, by using the experiences gained through European and domestic practices. The workshop was part of the second phase of the JUFREX project on “Freedom of Expression and Media Freedom in the Republic of North Macedonia”. At the end of the event, a discussion was held on the draft of the self-regulating document on the audiovisual media programmes’ accessibility. By means of this document, the audiovisual service providers in the country will be able to agree upon the way in which, in accordance with the requirements of the AVMS Directive, they will gradually make their programmes constantly accessible to persons with disabilities. All remarks and commentaries presented at the workshop were incorporated into the draft document, which was put up for public hearing in the period from 5 until 31 October 2020, and is soon expected to be adopted.

## **6. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

- **Supporting media and media pluralism in coping with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic**

Bearing in mind the essential need to provide the citizens with timely, objective and comprehensive information on how to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus and on the measures taken up by the competent authorities, the specific position

of the media in conditions of a declared state of emergency, as well as their socially responsible role and the consequences affecting their economic operations, in March 2020, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services granted financial assistance to the television and radio stations in the form of a donation, to help them cope with the consequences of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The total amount of the donation was MKD 103,000,000.00 (approximately Euro 1,675,000.00).

Of these funds, MKD 73,000,000.00 (around Euro 1,187,000.00) were granted to commercial and non-profit broadcasters conducting television or radio broadcasting, while MKD 30,000,000.00 (around Euro 487,800.00) were allocated to the Public Broadcasting Service, i.e. the Macedonian Radio and Television. These funds were granted for the purpose of providing protection for the media workers through purchasing protective equipment; for expenditures related to the production, procurement and broadcasting of programme; to help alleviate the adverse effects of the Coronavirus outbreak on the economic performance of the broadcasters, and to enable their smooth functioning.