

18 November 2004



COMPLIANCE WITH MEDIA ELECTION RULES:

FINAL REPORT

During the election campaign period of 22 September through 23 October, the Office of the Temporary Media Commissioner (OTMC) was responsible for ensuring compliance with the Central Election Commission's Electoral Rule 10/2004, pertaining to print and broadcast media.

The OTMC today issues its final report regarding the performance of the media during the election campaign 2004.

We are pleased to express satisfaction with the compliance of radio and television stations with Electoral Rule 10 throughout Kosovo. Broadcasters in general provided fair and equitable access to candidates and parties as defined by ER 10/2004. Kosovo's main radio and television stations broadcast an impressively large number of debates. A requirement to provide at least a minimum amount of air-time for all Certified Political Entities appears to have served a useful purpose.

The OTMC received relatively few complaints from political entities and none that indicated systematic or deliberate bias on the part of broadcasters. Nor was any such bias reported to OTMC by OSCE monitors or the Council of Europe's Election Observer team.

The performance of print media, which were also required to provide fair and equitable news coverage, was notably mixed, with Kosovo's seven daily newspapers divided into two distinct groups. One group generally observed the spirit of fairness and inclusiveness embodied in the election rules. The other did not.

Koha Ditore, Kosova Sot, Epoka e Re, Zeri and Lajm Exclusiv (which began publication several days after the campaign started) provided reasonably fair and balanced news coverage of political entities that extended significantly beyond the major parties.

These five newspapers devoted an average of 63 percent of their coverage to the three leading parties (LDK, PDK and AAK) in equitable proportions. The same five newspapers devoted another 22 to 29 percent of their coverage to another 5 to 8 smaller parties.

The number of parties or individual candidates receiving no measurable coverage by these newspapers ranged from two (in Kosovo Sot) to 15 (Epoka e Re) and 18 (Lajm, which, as noted, began publishing after the start of the campaign) of the 32 political entities certified throughout the campaign.

In marked contrast to the majority of newspapers, Bota Sot and Pavaresia failed by any reasonable measure to provide fair and equitable access to a broad spectrum of political parties. These two newspapers devoted 85 percent and 86 percent of their election-related coverage respectively to the LDK and its allied party, the PSHDK. Smaller amounts of coverage devoted to other parties, notably ORA, often displayed a systematically negative bias.

No newspapers, however, distinguished themselves in their coverage of parties and candidates representing non-Albanian ethnic communities, although coverage did broaden in the second half of the campaign as some smaller parties launched their activities.

The 11 minority political entities received an average of 0.44 percent of election-related news coverage in Kosova Sot, Lajm, Koha Ditore, Zeri and Epoka e Re. Total proportions of coverage devoted to non-Albanian parties in this group ranged from 3.8 percent in Koha Ditore to 1.9 percent in Zeri.

No newspaper provided coverage to all the minority political entities. Bota Sot provided no measurable coverage of any non-Albanian political entity.

While it is true that most of the readers of Kosovo's newspapers are Albanian, the low level of coverage of non-Albanian political entities meant that readers received little information or insight into the role that these ethnic communities and their political entities may play in a multi-ethnic Kosovo. Non-Albanian communities were, to a large extent, marginalized by print media throughout the election campaign.

During the campaign period, OTMC dealt with 22 complaints, of which 12 were initiated *ex officio* by the OTMC and 10 were received through the Election Complaints and Appeals Commission or directly from individual complainants. Of the 22, one was withdrawn by the complainant, four were dismissed, 14 resulted in official warnings and three remain under investigation.

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Temporary Media Commissioner