Media That Do Not Ask:
Serbian Parliamentary Elections - Online Media Monitoring
September 2019 – June 2020

Executive Summary

Extensive online media monitoring ahead of the June 2020 Serbian parliamentary elections exposed an overwhelming imbalance in media coverage of political actors. Government officials received significantly more netural to positive coverage by monitored media, while opposition figures were marginalized and when covered the prevailing tone was negative.

President Aleksandar Vučić was by far the most frequent and most positive actor presented in the media, multiple times more so then the next most frequent - Prime Minister Ana Brnabić.

While the majority of monitored articles were neutral, monitoring findings demonstrated a substantial lack of contentious topics. Most notable was the lack of coverage of contentious topics during the state of emergency that following the initial Covid-19 outbreak in Serbia.

Online media did little to encourage informed debate ahead of the elections. Rather than asking questions media largely turned to promoting and amplifying government messages and retaliation against dissenting or critical voices.

Introduction

IRI’s Beacon Project, in partnership with the Belgrade-based Bureau for Social Research (BIRODI), monitored media for coverage of election-related topics in the online portals of six of Serbia’s leading TV broadcasters ahead of parliamentary elections which took place on June 21, 2020. The research sought to assess the impartiality of online media by monitoring the number of articles that focused on several political actors and four significant topics as well as the tone of coverage. It also examined coverage of associated themes and topics relevant to the election process and the country’s geopolitical position.
With support from IRI, BIRODI expanded its ongoing monitoring of TV broadcasts to include the online news portals affiliated with these channels. BIRODI used its in-house expertise on media monitoring to review and code the TV broadcasts, and employed methodology developed by IRI’s Beacon Project using the >versus< media monitoring tool to easily review and code articles published on the web. This allowed detailed insight and evidence about the relative presence of selected political actors and four topics in monitored news portals, as well as proportions of the tones of their coverage.

BIRODI’s previous monitoring of primetime news broadcasts of five television national stations and cable N1 TV station, found a lack of balance in media reporting as described in its publication Industrija populizma.¹

The media selected for monitoring represents both public and private stations, as well ones perceived as being better disposed to the government and the opposition. The monitored online portals included: rts.rs (Radio Television of Serbia - RTS), prva.rs (First Serbian Television - Prva), happytv.tv (Happy TV), rs.n1info.com (N1), pink.rs (Pink), b92.net (B92). The portal rts.rs is the state owned Serbian public broadcaster, while other five outlets are private. It is worth noting that BIRODI’s previous TV media monitoring showed that the reporting of five of the outlets (rts.rs, prva.rs, happytv.tv, pink.rs, b92.net) was assessed as generally leaning towards official government positions, while rs.n1info.com leaned towards the opposition. With exception of N1, all TV broadcasters associated to monitored online portals have a national reach.

Methodology

The media monitoring covers two time periods: the first between September 1 and December 31, 2019 and the second between March 1 and June 21, 2020. Using IRI’s >versus< monitoring tool, monitors analyzed over 10,300 articles in the Serbian language. The elections, originally slated for April 2020, were postponed until late June due to the spread of Covid-19, which also dominated the news and influenced later changes in the methodology.

In addition to the six online media outlets, BIRODI also tracked key words for search queries designed to precisely track individual political actors and selected topics.

During the first monitoring period (P1), around 5,500 articles were reviewed using 17 different search queries were analyzed. There were 13 queries to track articles related to 13 selected political actors and four queries focused on four selected topics. The monitoring team researched how many times selected political actors and topics appeared over the determined time-period in each of six online media portals. BIRODI also analyzed whether media portrayed the selected actor and theme either using a positive or negative tone.

The monitoring team selected 13 political actors, based on their relative popularity and/or potential influence, while accounting for ideological diversity. The list consists of both pro-government and opposition actors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pro-government included</th>
<th>Opposition included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aleksandar Vučić</strong> (President of Serbia, Serbian Progressive Party)</td>
<td><strong>Dragan Dilas</strong> (Leader, Party of Freedom and Justice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ana Brnabić</strong> (Prime Minister, Serbian Progressive Party)</td>
<td><strong>Sergej Trifunović</strong> (Leader, Free Citizens Movement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ivica Dačić</strong> (Foreign Minister, Socialist Party of Serbia)</td>
<td><strong>Vuk Jeremić</strong> (Leader, People’s Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aleksandar Vulin</strong> (Defense Minister, Movement of Socialist)</td>
<td><strong>Boško Obradović</strong> (Leader, Dveri Party)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The >versus< media monitoring tool is scraping articles in Serbian language.

The time gap reflects the decision to postpone the elections from April to June due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
Four significant topics were chosen as the primary focus of this research. These were selected based on their importance in indicating the future direction of Serbian politics as well as potential to shape election campaigns and the formation of governing coalitions.

1. **Relationship with NATO** – This covered issues such as Serbia’s future relationship with NATO (e.g. potential membership), perceptions of NATO activities in the region and perceptions of NATO’s internal organization. The monitors focused on one main question: “Is the relationship with NATO described by media as beneficial for Serbia or not?”

2. **Relationship with Russia** – This covers the nature of political and economic cooperation with Russia, signs of prioritizing Russia in Serbian foreign politics and perception of cultural and religious ties between the two countries. The monitors focused on the question: “Is the relationship with Russia described by media as beneficial for Serbia or not?”

3. **Elections will (not) be Free and Fair** - Related to the media coverage of allegations and demands of anti-government protesters and opposition politicians related to the quality and legality of election conditions. The monitors focused on the question: “Are election processes and the election campaign period free and fair or not?”

4. **Status of Kosovo** – This covered how Kosovo is presented – whether as a part of Serbia, an independent state, or something else that is somewhere between these two options. The monitors focused on the question: “Is Kosovo described by media as a part of Serbia, independent country or something else?”

In addition to the four above mentioned topics, researchers also coded supplemental themes or topics which appeared in the media with the monitored politicians and narratives. This included foreign actors (US, China, EU, Russia or Putin) or other significant issues such as, corruption or the election boycott.

The primary aim was not to see how the political actors directly discussed the specific topics, but rather how the media coverage was presenting the topics. Therefore, the resulting data does not necessarily represent positions explicitly endorsed by the political actors on the topics.

After the Covid-19 outbreak, IRI adjusted its monitoring methodology to the new circumstances by focusing on two new topics - **Healthcare** and the **Economy**, which

---

Formally, Vojislav Šešelj is an opposition party member, but his political views are more supportive of the government.
were dominating public discourse. Key words in all 17 search queries were also changed by adding keywords such as “COVID”, “corona” and “COVID-19” in order to shift the focus of monitoring to the pandemic. In the second monitoring period between March 1 and May 31 (P2), IRI monitored these topics in the same selected media and coded 3,722 unique articles to see how they influenced the election environment and coverage of politicians. More precisely, it tracked how selected online media portrayed the government’s response to Covid-19 in the areas of healthcare and the economy. The monitoring also continued to follow coverage of Serbian political actors and the topic Free and Fair elections. Monitoring of other topics was stopped. For more information about the methodology and detailed background of Serbian Elections see the Introduction page to the Serbian Elections on the Beacon Project’s website.

Monitoring results

Actors

Media inequality – in terms of the representation and tone of reporting on monitored actors - identified by BIRODI in six years of monitoring of current affairs programs is also present in the monitoring of associated on-line portals, during P1 and P2. This indicates a systemic editorial policy attuned to the interests of politicians in power and interest groups supporting politicians in power.

Pro-government bias on monitored on-line portals is demonstrated by the frequency in which government actors are represented compared to those from opposition parties - approximately four times more. In P1, 83.6% (6,116) of articles favored government actors and 16.4% (1,196 articles) favored opposition actors, whereas the proportion in P2 was 75.8% (1,315) favoring government actors and 24.2% (419) favoring opposition actors. At the same time, in P1, actors within the ‘ruling’ sample were presented in neutral or positive manner in 90.5% of cases, whereas in the same period, the opposition actors were negatively presented in 63% of the cases.

In P2 the ratio of positive to negative coverage remained the same the government actors (approx. 90% neutral or positive to 10% negative). At the same time the opposition actors received more favorable coverage, going from approx. 63% negative coverage to approx. 50%. The explanation for this can be found in the public decision of the most represented actor, President Aleksandar Vučić, who stated that he would stop mentioning opposition leaders, but also by the fact that negotiations about electoral conditions had just begun with

---

4 https://www.iribeaconproject.org/article/RSelection
6 Monitoring period including media monitoring September – December 2019
7 Monitoring period including media monitoring March – May 2020
the mediation of the European Parliament. It is this “glossing over” by the media that may point to control exerted by the government.

This thesis is supported by the representation of government actors that coincides with their (in)formal power within the executive government. During P1, the most influential actor within this group, Aleksandar Vučić, was represented with 63.7%, and during P2 this percentage was almost the same, 64.7%. In P1 and P2, the representation of Prime Minister, Ana Brnabić, in the monitored news items was 14.1% and 17%, respectively. In P1, Ivica Dačić’s share was 10.1%, and in P2 his share was (only) 6.5% of the monitored news items. Aleksandar Vulin and Marko Đurić trailed behind these three leading actors with their share in the monitored media not deviating a significant amount between P1 and P2, remaining at about 4% each.

Inequality among opposition actors also remained unchanged. Unlike in P1, when Dragan Đilas was the most represented actor (40% of the opposition group’s coverage), in P2, owing to his hunger strike in front of the National Assembly of Serbia, Boško Obradović came first with 24.7% of coverage in P1 which then rose to 37% in P2. The only opposition politician that retained steady coverage was Vuk Jeremić who, in both periods, took the third place despite a dropping from 14.7% in P1 to 7.1% in P2. Insignificant changes in coverage were recorded in the periods P1 and P2 for Sergej Trifunović (P1–7.3%/P2-6.6%), Zoran Lutovac (P1-6.3%/P2-6%) and Čedomir Jovanović who was represented with 4.8% in both periods.

The tone of reporting on the government actors speaks of their more favourable position in the monitored on-line portals. Namely, on average, in both periods they were presented positively or neutrally. Thus, the most represented actor in P1, Aleksandar Vučić, was presented positively 32.7% of instances, 56% neutrally and 10.9% negatively, and in P2 - 33%, 62.5%, 6.5% respectively. In comparison, oppositional actors were predominantly presented neutrally or positively, noting that with some negative reporting was more present than neutral, combining three groups of labels: tycoon, fascist, and criminal. Dragan Đilas, labelled as a tycoon in P1, was presented positively 3.8% of coverage, 19% neutrally and 77.3% negatively. In P2, there was no positive reporting on him, but only 30.5% of neutral and 69.5% negative tone. Boško Obradović and Vuk Jeremić were given the same treatment as one another. Boško Obradović was labelled as a fascist in both periods

---

8 Example of positive presentation of Aleksandar Vučić: [https://www.pink.rs/Politika/177087/177087](https://www.pink.rs/Politika/177087/177087)
11 Relationship between positive, neutral and negative presentation in the monitored news item, at the level of reference
12 The same reporting model was identified for other actors Brnabić (P1-16.7%; 77.6%; 6.2% / P2 - 25.2%; 78%; 8.3%), Dačić (P1 – 16.9%, 78.1%; 5% / P2 – 4%; 93%; 3), Djurić (P1 – 27.5%; 67.2%; 5.5% / P2 – 19.6%, 80.4%; 0) and Vulin (P1 - 27.1%, 65.9; 7% / P2- 21, 1%; 72.1%, 5.8%)
13 When expressed in the number of news items, these are 2 news items
14 Example of positive reporting on Dragan Đilas: [http://rs.n1info.com/Vesti/a563890/Djilas-najavio-tuzbu-protiv-Vucelica.html](http://rs.n1info.com/Vesti/a563890/Djilas-najavio-tuzbu-protiv-Vucelica.html)
15 Example of neutral reporting on Dragan Đilas: [https://www.pink.rs/Politika/180674/180674](https://www.pink.rs/Politika/180674/180674)
16 Example of negative reporting on Dragan Đilas: [https://www.pink.rs/Politika/180471/180471](https://www.pink.rs/Politika/180471/180471)
(P1 - 5.9%; 28%, 66.1%/P2 – 0.5; 51%, 48.5%) and the epithet of a criminal was hurled at Vuk Jeremić (P1 - 6%; 23.4%, 70.6%, P2 – 0%; 53.2%; 46.6%), whereas among other oppositional actors negative presentation exceeded the neutral one, and in both periods of monitoring, there was very little or no positive reporting.17

In sum, due to such reporting by the national TV stations and their on-line portals, the media space was dominated by overwhelmingly favorable coverage of the government, notably of President Aleksandar Vučić, and while marginalizing and negatively covering the opposition, led by Dragan Đilas and Boško Obradović. The fact that the opposition has found itself outside parliament and failed to compete in elections raises the questions about the responsibility of the Regulatory Authority of Electronic Media (REM) and the public media service RTS to ensure balanced and unbiased reporting. Under the accusations of failing to provide necessary conditions for balanced and unbiased media reporting, REM and RTS remain as the key reasons why group of opposition parties decided to boycott elections and protest against overwhelmingly favourable coverage of government in national media.

Topics

Pro-governmental bias in the reporting of on-line portals of national TV channels can be seen in the topic of Kosovo. Of the 2,027 mentions in P1, the most often presented narrative related to efforts to resolve the Kosovo issue (56.7%) were largely due to the activities of US Ambassador Richard Grenell. The narrative that Kosovo is a part of Serbia was present in every third article monitored, while the narrative of Kosovo as an independent state was marginal (5.5%).

Serbia is Russia’s most important ally in the Western Balkans. In order to maintain the ‘special relationship,’ observers noted the government seemed to promote a favorable image of Russian ahead of elections.18 That reporting appeared intended to suit the interests of the president and the Serbian government is supported by the fact that the topic of relations between Serbia and Russia is presented positively in 52.3% of content. The newly appointed Russian ambassador to Serbia, Alexander Botsan Kharchenko and his media activities are also notable for creating such positive image of Russia.

17 Lutovac (P1 – 5.6%; 67.5%; 26.8%/P2 – 0%; 88.9%, 11,1%), Sergej Trifunović (P1 – 7,5%; 54,2%; 38,3%/P2 – 0%; 67.5%; 32,5%) and Čedomir Jovanović (P1 – 24,7%; 60,5%; 14,8%/ P2 – 0%, 89,7%; 10,3%)

18 https://carnegie.ru/commentary/82156
After assuming office, Ambassador Kharchenko carried out a considerable number of public activities covered by the media, particularly his meetings with the highest ranking government officials, his statements about Kosovo, and announcements of planned visits to Serbia by the highest Russian state officials – President Putin and Minister of Defence Sergey Shoygu).

As opposed to the most frequent topic of Kosovo and most positively toned topic of Russia, articles on electoral conditions were dominated by a neutral narrative focusing mainly on efforts taken to improve these conditions. Out of 606 news items, 46.2% had a neutral narrative in which the media only conveyed information from the discussions held at the Faculty of Political Sciences and meetings in the National Assembly of Serbia with the mediation of MEPs, Tanja Fajon and Vladimír Bilčík. Looking at the findings, it can be observed that 304 of the articles referred to the opposition and free and fair elections, which was the most covered topic for that group of actors. On the other hand, articles where government actors were mentioned within the topic of elections only took fifth place on the list, with a total of 490 articles.

Even after a quarter of a century, reporting on NATO is burdened by the intervention in 1999, with 45.2% of all news items discussing NATO mentioning the bombing campaign. On the other hand, there appears to be efforts to change this narrative with 50.2% of the total number of articles about NATO. These articles portray a more neutral perspective on NATO.

Comparing the overall thematic structure of government and oppositional actors, beyond the four main topics that were the specific subject of monitoring, it can be concluded that there are two diametrically opposite thematic priorities. One group clearly prioritizes external topics with relation to foreign factors and, another is domestically centered with priorities on topics more linked to the local circumstances.

During the monitoring period from September to December 2019 (P1), government actors were more represented in articles dealing with foreign topics: Kosovo (2,000), the European Union (1,334), Russia (809), the United States (658), China (297), NATO (274) and Putin (261). Domestic topics in this group of actors were pushed to the background: free and fair
elections (490), corruption (305), youth (223), boycott (181), the ‘1 in 5 Million Movement’ and the ‘Future of Serbia’ (113) and (98). Although the government tried to attract both external and internal support and thus build its legitimacy, they still remain stronger in the foreign topics territory, like on Kosovo for example, which traditionally was securing winning narratives for the government.

In contrast, opposition actors were most often represented in articles that addressed both domestic and foreign topics: fair and free elections (304), European integration (191), Kosovo (191), boycott (169), corruption (161), ‘1 in 5 million movement’ (92) and Russia (91). In this way, the opposition sought to mobilize dissatisfied people and build legitimacy, in order to eventually translate this into political capital.

In the graph showing occurrence of different topics in the P1 we can see that internal topics (used by the opposition for mobilization of dissatisfied citizens) are on the edge of media interest.

The analysis of actors and topics in P1 points to a different presence of actors. In addition to the ubiquitous Aleksandar Vučić, articles on Kosovo refer to Đačić as the so-called project manager tasked with withdrawal of the recognition of Kosovo, and Marko Đurić as the director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija. In the articles on NATO, the Minister of Defence, Aleksandar Vulin, was significantly more present than other actors.

After the spread of the pandemic to Serbia and the announcement of the decision to declare a state of emergency followed the next day by the decision of the Republic Electoral Commission to suspend all electoral activities, the parties that had submitted their
candidate lists or decided to participate in the election or declare a boycott, stopped their activities and the topic of free and fair elections fell into the background. The Serbian government established two bodies - the Crisis Response Team to deal with health issues, headed by the Prime Minister, Ana Brnabić, and another dealing with the economic impact and recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic, headed by the President Aleksandar Vučić.²⁴ The state of the healthcare system and healthcare policy at the time of Covid-19 was the most present topic with a neutral or positive narrative. The topic of economic policy implemented by the Serbian Government also received largely neutral or positive coverage at the onset Covid-19 pandemic, while the coverage of electoral conditions was predominantly neutral. In P2, Aleksandar Vučić was again the most present actor with the most positive representation in articles on healthcare (72%) and the economy (72.4%), while in articles on fair and free elections, the president and the Serbian Progressive Party were represented neutrally (80.8%).

This case also clearly shows a different approach in reporting on the actors. This is partly a consequence of Boško Obradović’s hunger strike, which resulted in him being the most represented opposition actor in this period. However, this helped neither him nor the other opposition actors when it came to changing the tone of reporting. It remained neutral or negative. In the texts on health issues, Boško Obradović was presented neutrally (66.6%) as was the case when it came to the government's economic policy regarding Covid-19. In P2, government did not lose the support of media.

**On-line portals**

The tone of reporting on on-line portals was predominantly neutral or positive in both periods. In P1, it was 28.3%; 62.5%; 9.2%²⁵ and in P2 it was 20.3%; 63.1%; 16.7%. Looking at the content it can be concluded that the editors of the analysed portals decided to act as "microphone holders" and carry simply informative journalistic pieces such as selective news and reports, rather than running analytical and opinion pieces. In that way, they joined the TV editors of prime time current affairs programs who also opted for informative journalism. The simple selective transmission of news without additional commentary or

²⁴ https://www.danas.rs/drustvo/vlada-srbije-osnovala-krizne-stabove-zbog-korona-virusa/
²⁵ Positive, neutral and negative presentation in the monitored news items at the level of mention in a particular period.
questions creates the impression of bias in favor of the authorities rather than serving the broader public interest. More detailed content analysis highlighting the disbalance of tone in the reporting on government and opposition candidates further illustrates that the national broadcasters were largely operating in support of the government during the election period.

Analyzing the monitoring results of privately owned portals such as prva.rs, happytv.tv, rs.n1info.com, pink.rs and b92.net on the one hand, and public service on-line portal rts.rs on the other, no clear differences arising from the ownership structure could be discerned. However, if media portals were to be analysed from the aspect of assigned national free-to-air channels, cable rs.n1info.com (the only one not having national free-to-air channel) stands out as a portal where reporting on actors and topics tends to have a more balanced tone. In P1, the results show that on rts.rs, the tone of 1,110 articles on pro-government actors was 31.7% positive, 65.68% neutral, and 2.95% negative. The analysis of 1,450 articles of the same type published on rs.n1info.com was 13.87% positive, 54.16% neutral, and 31.98% negative. Regarding articles on opposition actors, rts.rs had 136 articles in total, of which 5.43% were positive, 39.1% were neutral and 55.4% were negative. On rs.n1info.com, 390 articles were published in total, with 15.56% having a positive tone, 57.58% remaining neutral and 26.87% being negative. Although the national media are expected to present unbiased reports on political actors, media monitoring results clearly show that this is not the case.

All monitored portals reported on the actors in power in a neutral or positive manner, as opposed to their reports on oppositional actors, where the tone of reporting was negative. This, was particularly pronounced on TV Pink’s online portal where each opposition actor received significant negative coverage: Boško Obradović with 96.4% negative coverage; Dragan Đilas, 93.7%; Vuk Jeremić, 93.7%; Sergej Trifunović, 71.4%; and Zoran Lutovac, with 60%. It is important to note that the portal of TV Prva did not report on any oppositional actors.

Among the four key topics, the following were most represented in all on-line portals: Kosovo, Russia, and free and fair elections. The European Union was among the most represented secondary topics and more often than not was repeated so much that it followed right behind the topic of Kosovo (portals of RTS, TV Happy, B92). It is worth noting that the topics of the European Union and USA were often more represented than the topics of free and fair elections, demonstrating a lack of interest in these topics on the part of editors of the analysed portals (e.g. Pink, Happy, B92).

The highly popular B92.net on-line portal had the most news items dealing with the topic of Kosovo (483), whereas the portal of TV Pink contained the smallest (262). Portal TV
Happy published the largest number of texts (208) covering the topic of Russia, while the smallest number of such articles could be found on portal TV Prva (only three). NATO, which was utterly marginalised by the media, was mostly covered on B92.net (72 articles), and had the least coverage on the portal N1 (43). Portal TV N1 was the place where the readers could be best informed about discussions regarding free and fair electoral conditions (305), which adds to the impression that national TV channels coverage were inclined to marginalize this topic.

The period marked by the onset of Covid-19 pandemic put the monitored portals in the service of promoting of government’s actions against Covid-19. This seems to be supported by the fact that the topic of healthcare policy implemented by the government was the most represented, ranging from 66% to 75% of the total, and having a positive tone on Pink, Prva, Happy and B92. During P2, the RTS and N1 portals reported mostly on the topic of free and fair elections, primarily conveying information on negotiations on electoral conditions and activities related to the election boycott, which confirms the finding that in the case of N1 portal, half of the total analysed articles (58.5%) were presented neutrally, while this percentage on the portal of RTS reached 70.6%. Again, in this period, the portal of TV Prva did not display any article. Promotional and pro-government function of the TV Pink portal is best seen when it comes to the information on the economic policy of the Serbian Government during the Covid-19 pandemic. This portal published 154 positively connoted news items (76.2%). This topic had more positive coverage on the portal of TV Prva (80%), but only within the smallest number of articles (15).

The monitoring findings unequivocally confirm that the citizens of Serbia are not able to obtain information in line with the rights guaranteed to them by the Law on Electronic Media (Article 47) and the Law on Public Information (Article 15). This assessment is further supported by the previous findings of surveys conducted by BIRODI in 2014 and 2019, which indicate that only every fifth citizen of Serbia is satisfied with the objectivity of the information obtained. Similarly, IRI's Beacon Project poll from 2018 captures 24% of total Serbian population satisfied with major media and describe them as professional and unbiased.26

With the pre-election monitoring of the news coverage on the majority of websites affiliated with national TV channels, collected data and their analysis confirm substantial and worrisome continuance of media coverage biased in favor of government. In order to introduce the shift in the media reporting based on the findings of the media monitoring, BIRODI proposes the set of recommendations.

**Recommendations**

---

26 IRI’s Beacon Project public opinion poll conducted in November 2018 - https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/pdf_beacon_w_balkans.pdf
Given the growing amount of information obtained through on-line platforms and its expected increasing influence on formed attitudes, it is necessary to further develop the monitoring methodology, from a statistical approach to include more detailed content analysis, and accordingly identify the presence of recognizable narratives;

Organize meetings with the editors of the analyzed on-line TV portals and have consultations on the research findings to determine the factors that affect the monitoring results and prejudice the right to information which is constitutionally guaranteed to the Serbian citizens (Article 51), also including the observance of the Code of Ethics of the Serbian journalists;

Organize educational workshops and brainstorming session with various stakeholders on analysis of the reasons for biased news reporting with the objective to improve the quality of news coverage of on-line TV newsrooms, (special emphasis to put on the topic of “listening to the audience”); this activity should include on-line media that pose a good example of reporting that can be used as allies and help create mechanisms for impartial, professional and objective reporting and for strengthening the resistance to negative influence on editorial offices and the production of fake news.

Initiate a discussion with decision-makers and other stakeholders on the need and necessity for the Regulatory Authority (REM) to start, within its competence, to monitor media reporting on on-line portals. This recommendation can and should be extended to those media that report exclusively in on-line format, given that in Serbia, there are a significant number of such media and that their outreach and influence should certainly not be neglected.

---

27 IRI regional public opinion poll (February - March 2020) – in Serbia even 43% of those between 18 and 35 gain information about political developments from Internet; 23% in total population (https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/final_wb_poll_for_publishing_6.9.2020.pdf)

28 http://www.birodi.rs/birodi-integritet-u-medijima-izmedu-teorije-prakse-i-potreba/