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DROITS DE L'HOMME,
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ET ÉTAT DE DROIT

Presentation of media and internet related work/activities with a focus on gender equality

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Study on media coverage of elections with a specific focus on gender equality



Importance of political communication during election periods

Maintenance of integrity, fairness and legitimacy of the election process

Reliance of voters on the news to form their opinion and vote

Principles of election campaigns:

- Fairness (no improper or hidden influence of various groups)
- Transparency (in expenditure of political parties)
- Equal access of political parties and candidates to media



Two strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action

- Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication.
- Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.



Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on gender equality and media

Identified problems:

- Women's under-representation in media ownership, in information production and journalism, in newsrooms and management posts, often precarious conditions of employment
- Women's low visibility, both in terms of quality and quantity, in media content
- Rare use of women as experts and the relative absence of women's viewpoints and opinions in the media
- **Persistence of sexist stereotypes and lack of counter-stereotypes in the media coverage of political events and election campaigns**

Recommendations:

- Adoption and implementation of an appropriate legal framework to prohibit discrimination
- Adoption of self-regulatory measures and internal codes of conduct by media outlets to promote equal representation of men and women in media work
- Adoption of indicators on gender equality in the media and a regular monitoring of the representation of men and women in the media
- Media literacy to include gender equality perspective



Questions addressed by the study

- Do women and men candidates receive equal media coverage?
- Who reports on elections? (Ratio of male and female journalists)
- What messages are conveyed to the voters?
- What, if any, impact do these messages have on voters' decisions?
- What are the mechanisms in place to ensure equal representation of women and men candidates?
- Is there a need to adopt additional instruments to ensure equal representation of both genders in the pre-electoral media coverage?



Political communication in terms of gender perspective

- Stronger media coverage of male candidates
- Political topics are mostly presented by male reporters and political shows host a majority of male guests
- Women candidates are mostly interviewed on issues considered as „soft topics“ (health, culture, education, etc.), but not on politics, government, defence, economy, etc.
- Gender-biased portrayals (women candidates receive more attention to appearance, age, family, etc.)



Stereotypes framing the media coverage of women politicians

- Style over substance
- Sexualisation
- Family status
- Designation as „wife of ...“



Influence of stereotypical reporting on the voters

U.S. research 1992: voters tend to respond more positively to political candidates that receive the type of coverage usually accorded to male candidates, including the opportunity to voice their views on “hard” issues

U.S. research 2014: sexist coverage reduces votes in favour of women candidates



Mechanisms and practices in the Council of Europe member States

- Statutory requirements on gender equality in media coverage
- Media regulatory authorities' guidelines and strategies
- Media self-regulation
 - Journalist organisations and press councils
 - Initiatives/best practices from the media and journalists
- Civil society initiatives
- Tools for improving gender portrayal in the media

Conclusion: few specific initiatives addressing election coverage from a gender perspective



Conclusions of the study

- Need for better implementation of existing standards targeting women in the media and sexism
- Explicit inclusion of gender equality requirements in national legislation covering the media
- Encouragement of political parties to include gender equality perspective in their internal policies
- Dialogue with media organisations and self-regulatory bodies on the gender perspective of the coverage of elections
- Inclusion of the gender equality perspective in the coverage of elections by social media
- Assurance of gender equality in the editorial teams covering elections
- Monitoring of media content as regards the respect for gender equality requirements
- Media education and trainings – for journalists and their audiences
- Research and analysis of the impact of biased election coverage on voters' choices



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Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)2 on the roles and responsibilities of internet intermediaries



INTERNET USERS

- use online services
- make online payments / transactions
- look for / share information
- perform other daily activities



INTERNET INTERMEDIARIES

- connect users to the internet
- enable the processing of information and data
- host and store web-based services
- perform other **intermediary** functions



Internet intermediaries may also:

- moderate and rank content, including through automated techniques
- exert other forms of control / influence users' access to information online
- collect, retain and process users' information and data



the basis of:

- terms of service
- in-house policies

But also internet intermediaries:

- search for, identify and remove allegedly illegal content
- are required to assess the validity of requests from public or private parties to remove certain content



On the basis of:

- official requests from public authorities
- internal content-management policies
- (often insufficient) regulatory framework
- informal co-operation agreements with public authorities



Need for re-establishing human rights-based and rule of law-based approach

- internet must not be a lawless space;
- human right must be equally guaranteed and protected online and offline;
- non-liability of intermediaries for third-party content;
- obligations / responsibilities of all stakeholders must be clearly established and strictly observed;
- safeguards and effective remedies must be in place.

This is the overall objective of the Recommendation on internet intermediaries!

Gender equality perspective

- **Preamble:** acknowledgment that the internet facilitates, *inter alia*, gender-based harassment which remains underreported and is rarely remedied
- **Operative part:**
 - Recommendation to implement the guidelines in line with relevant obligations of intermediaries following from, *inter alia*, the Istanbul Convention, the Lanzarote Convention and Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 on gender equality and media
 - Recommendation to promote the implementation of effective gender-sensitive media and information literacy programmes to enable everyone to enjoy the benefits and minimise the risks related to online communications environment
- **Appendix/Guidelines:**
 - Elaboration of requirements of state support and intermediaries' engagement in promoting age- and gender-sensitive activities regarding media and information literacy
 - Requirement for intermediaries to provide their products and services without any discrimination, including any indirect discriminatory effects or harmful impacts on their users

Thank you for your attention!

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