Committee of experts on Media Pluralism and Transparency of Media Ownership (MSI-MED)

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Draft feasibility study on a standard – setting instrument on media coverage of elections with a specific focus on gender equality

Introduction

[This document is a draft outline that aims at proposing a structure for the final version. The text is in no way final: at this stage, it serves to indicate possible directions or options to be discussed at the MSI-MED meeting].

The suggested outline is the following:

Part 1 covers two (2) existing Council of Europe instruments, namely the CM/Rec(2007)15 on measures concerning media coverage of election campaigns and the CM/Rec(2013)1 on gender equality and media. This section looks at the problems identified in the two (2) instruments and the recommendations they put forward. This is simply a description / summary of the existing texts. There are two (2) different topics (gender equality in media, media coverage of elections) envisaged within the respective recommendations and the rest of the document will try to bring the two (2) topics together.

Part 2 seeks to identify new issues that need to be dealt with (specifically, the new notion of media) and the issues that will arise from bringing the two (2) topics together (what are the specific questions that emerge in relation to media coverage of elections when you specifically focus on gender equality).

Part 3 looks at existing practices, in Member States, that seek to improve (a) gender equality in media generally, and (b) gender equality in media coverage of elections specifically. This serves to identify examples, good practices, and to assess the need for further recommendations or initiatives.

Part 4 then gathers recommendations on how to improve gender equality in the media coverage of elections.

Conclusions: Here, an important discussion will be whether the Committee thinks that existing instruments are sufficient but their implementation needs to be improved, or whether a new instrument is needed.]

Set up by the Committee of Ministers under Article 17 of the Statute of the Council of Europe and in accordance with Resolution CM/Res(2011)24 on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods, the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) within its term of reference valid from: 1 January 2016 until 31 December 2017, has a specific activity to :

"(ii) Carry out a feasibility study on a possible standard-setting instrument on media coverage of elections, with particular regard to gender equality and the use of the Internet in elections, and, if appropriate, submit to the Committee of Ministers".

The above stated specific task was assigned to Committee of experts on Media Pluralism and Transparency of Media Ownership (MSI-MED) and during its first meeting (22-23 March 2016) the MSI-MED had an exchange of views on issue mapping non-paper for Feasibility study on a standard-setting instrument on media coverage of elections, with a specific focus on gender equality, and the use of the Internet in elections.

The feasibility study will have two focuses: a. the use of Internet in elections and b. gender equality on the coverage of election campaigns.

The MSI-MED decided that the two components of their second task, namely the feasibility study on the use of Internet in elections and the gender equality in the context of media coverage of elections, will be dealt with separately.

On the second focus, "gender aspects of media coverage of electoral campaigns", a reflection at CDMSI level had started by an informal group[1] who met in Strasbourg on 27 September 2011. Their work, which was not followed-up by a specific standard-setting instrument, is the basis for the relevant part of this paper[2].

Part I General context: instruments of the Council of Europe dealing with the topics of media coverage of election campaigns and gender equality in media

Media coverage of elections is crucial for public, civil society, state institutions and political parties, but also for private, nongovernmental sector, and international community as well. By providing access to political candidates to convey their messages to the public, the media has an essential role as the primary source of information about politics and elections. The fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression and freedom of information must be consistent part of the member states' regulatory framework for media coverage and as such must also protect citizens' right to adequate and balanced information, right of political parties and candidates to equal opportunities, as well as guarantee free democratic process by authorities' attitude of non-interference.

Media pluralism and diversity of media content are essential for the functioning of a democratic society and are the corollaries of the fundamental right to freedom of expression and information as guaranteed by Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

The demands which result from Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms will be fully satisfied only if each person is given the possibility to form his or her own opinion from diverse sources of information.[3]

Given the important role of the media as a significant influence on citizens' critical thinking and forming opinions, especially in the time of elections, it is necessary to enable the media

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[1] The following experts participated in the meeting: Margaret Gallagher (UK/IR), Joke Hermes (NL), Emir Povlakic (BiH), Bissera Zankova (BG).

[2] The existence of such a previous work is the only reason why that part is more detailed in this paper than the "use of internet" focus

[3] Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on media pluralism and diversity of media content

to provide fair, balanced and impartial media coverage during electoral periods. These three principles of fairness, balance and impartiality are stipulated in the Council of Europe Recommendation CM/REC(2007)15[4] encouraging member states to ensure free and fair coverage of election campaigns by the media. For the purposes of the stated Recommendation, the term "media" refers to "those responsible for the periodic creation of information and content and its dissemination over which there is editorial responsibility, irrespective of the means and technology used for delivery, which are intended for reception by, and which could have a clear impact on, a significant proportion of the general public". In practice, this is taken to mean print and broadcast media, as well as "online news-services (such as online editions of newspapers and newsletters) and non-linear audiovisual media services (such as on-demand television)". The scope of the Recommendation encompasses "all types of political elections taking place in member states, including presidential, legislative, regional and, where practicable, local elections and referenda".

Two sets of principles are stipulated: general provisions and measures concerning broadcast media. The general provisions envisage that, the public authorities should refrain from interfering in the activities of journalists and other media personnel with the aim to influence elections. At the same time, the public authorities have to ensure effective protection to journalists and the media against any attacks, intimidation or other types of unlawful pressure but in a way that it does not obstruct the media in carrying out their work. The editorial independence of the media must be enshrined in the regulatory framework of all member states and should be fully respected. Where media are owned by public authorities, the media coverage has to be fair, balanced and impartial without discriminating against or supporting a specific political party or candidate. Moreover, the media are encouraged to develop self-regulatory frameworks and incorporate self-regulatory professional and ethical standards regarding their coverage of election campaigns including respect of principles of human dignity and non-discrimination.

Furthermore, transparency is stressed as an important principle, especially when it comes to paid political advertising. Such advertising has to be readily recognisable as such and made transparent to the public. The right of reply or equivalent remedies, if available under national laws, should be respected during the campaign period and be able to be exercised without undue delay. In the case of opinion polls, the regulatory and self-regulatory frameworks should ensure that the media, when disseminating the results of opinion polls, provide the public with sufficient information in order to enable citizens to make a judgement on the value of the polls. The principle of "Day of reflection" recommends to member states to consider merits of including a provision in their regulatory frameworks to prohibit the dissemination of partisan electoral massages on the day preceding voting or to provide for their correction.

When it comes to measures concerning broadcast media, the CM encourages regulatory frameworks that foster the pluralistic expression of opinions via the broadcast media. The three principles of fairness, balance and impartiality are especially stressed for news and

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[4] Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)15 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures concerning media coverage of election campaigns

current affairs programmes during campaign periods. The foregoing principles are also applicable to non-linear audiovisual services of public service media. Free airtime and equivalent presence for political parties and candidates on public service media should be offered in a fair and non-discriminatory manner and on the basis of transparent and objective criteria. The last measure in the Recommendation stresses that paid political advertising should be available on and according to equal conditions and rates of payment. According to the CM, member states "may consider introducing a provision in their regulatory frameworks to limit the amount of political advertising space and time which a given party or candidate can purchase". It also finds that "[r]egular presenters of news and current affairs programmes should not take part in paid political advertising".

« Gender equality is an indispensable condition for the full enjoyment of human rights. Genuine democracy requires the equal participation of women and men in society. Democracy and gender equality are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The inclusion of women and men, with respect for equal rights and opportunities, is an essential condition for democratic governance and sound decision making. Gender equality means equal visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation of both women and men in all spheres of public life, including the media. The achievement of gender equality is a prerequisite for the achievement of social justice. This is not of interest to women only, but it concerns society as a whole. »

In CM/Rec(2013)1 on gender equality and media, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe observed that "There is a gender dimension to media pluralism and diversity of media content. The Recommendationon media pluralism and diversity of media content reaffirms that pluralism and diversity are essential for the functioning of a democratic society, for fostering public debate, political pluralism and awareness of diverse opinions by different groups in society. The media are centrally placed to shape society's perceptions, ideas, attitudes and behaviour. They should reflect the reality of women and men, in all their diversity. »

« The media can either hinder or hasten structural change towards gender equality. Inequalities in society are reproduced in the media. This is true in respect of women's under-representation in media ownership, in information production and journalism, in newsrooms and management posts. It is even more blatant as regards women's low visibility, both in terms of quality and quantity, in media content, the rare use of women as experts and the relative absence of women's viewpoints and opinions in the media. Media coverage of political events and election campaigns is particularly telling in this respect, as are the persistence of sexist stereotypes and the scarcity of counter-stereotypes. Furthermore, women, as media professionals, often encounter pay inequalities, the "glass ceiling" and precarious conditions of employment. »

There are recommendations directed towards States and media actors. The recommendation also gives attention to its implementation. The Gender Equality Commission has published a handbook on the implementation of CM/Rec(2013)1 on gender equality and media.

Part II   Current issues related to gender equality in relation with the media coverage of elections

[It is suggested that MSI-MED Committee should decide what is to be understood as "media" for this document, as this will have consequences for the following sections of the document]

II.1   What is the media?

In 2011, the Council of Europe has adopted a recommendation on a new definition of media which stated that:

'With these changes in the media ecosystem, the functioning and existence of traditional media actors, as well as their economic models and professional standards, are being complemented or replaced by other actors. New actors have assumed functions in the production and distribution process of media services which, until recently, had been performed only (or mostly) by traditional media organisations; these include content aggregators, application designers and users who are also producers of content. A number of "intermediaries" or "auxiliaries", often stemming from the information and communication (ICT) sector, including those serving at the outset as mere hosts or conduits (for example infrastructure, network or platform operators), are essential for digital media's outreach and people's access to them. Services provided by these new actors have become essential pathfinders to information, at times turning the intermediaries or auxiliaries into gatekeepers or into players who assume an active role in mass communication editorial processes. Such services have complemented or, on occasion, partly replaced traditional media actors in respect of those functions. The roles of each actor can easily change or evolve fluidly and seamlessly. Furthermore, some have developed services or applications which have put them in a dominant position on a national or even at a global level.'[5]

This extends the notion of media to new actors in the media ecosystems. Discussions within MSI-MED on the draft resolution on pluralism in the media and transparency of ownership also consider the existence of new actors that have become very powerful in the distribution of media content in the contemporary media landscapes, such as social media and online platforms generally. In as much as the roles of these actors extend beyond the hosting of third-party content – where the regime of conditional liability immunity applies – it is necessary to look into their possible influence on gender equality in the coverage of elections.

Should we include these new actors in the feasibility study? We would have to identify the possible duties, good practices, etc, that would be relevant for social media and online platforms in connection with gender equality and the coverage of elections.

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[5] Council of Europe CM Rec(2011)7 Recommendation on a new notion of media.

II.2 Gender equality in the coverage of elections

II.2.1 Current situation of gender equality in the media

Genuine democracy requires the equal participation of women and men in society. Democracy and gender equality are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The inclusion of women and men, with respect for equal rights and opportunities, is an essential condition for democratic governance and sound decision-making. Gender equality means equal visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation of both women and men in all spheres of public life, including the media. The achievement of gender equality is a prerequisite for the achievement of social justice. This is not of interest to women only, but it concerns society as a whole. The Council of Europe has accorded much importance to these matters over the last few decades, demonstrated, inter alia, by the 1988 Committee of Ministers' Declaration on equality of women and men and by the 2009 Committee of Ministers' Declaration on making gender equality a reality.

In contemporary democratic societies media have fundamental political, social, economic, and cultural functions as they cover issues of public interest and have an essential role in creating public opinion.

The Global Media Monitoring Project 2015 Report shows that in fifteen years there has been an improvement of only 5% when it comes to female reporters covering topics on politics and government and no improvement at all when it comes to covering legal and social topics (table 1).

TABLE 1

Stories by female reporters, by major topics. 2000-2015
(see Table 43)

	2015	Δ15 yrs	
Science and Health	50%	▲ 4%	—
Economy	39%	▲ 4%	—
Social and Legal	39%	■ 0%	—
Celebrity, Arts and Media, Sports	34%	▲ 7%	—
Crime and Violence	33%	▲ 4%	—
Politics and Government	31%	▲ 5%	—
TOTAL	**37%**	**▲ 9%**	
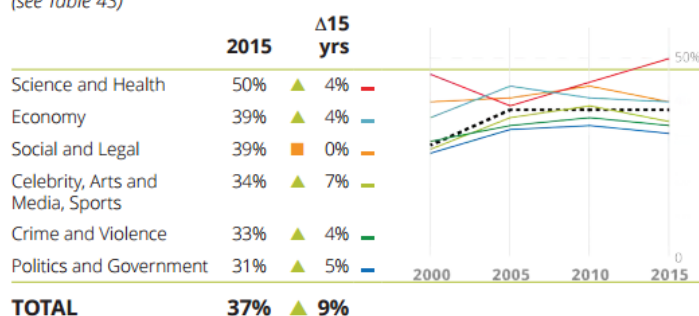
TABLE 2

Functions of female news subjects. 2005-2015. *(see Table*

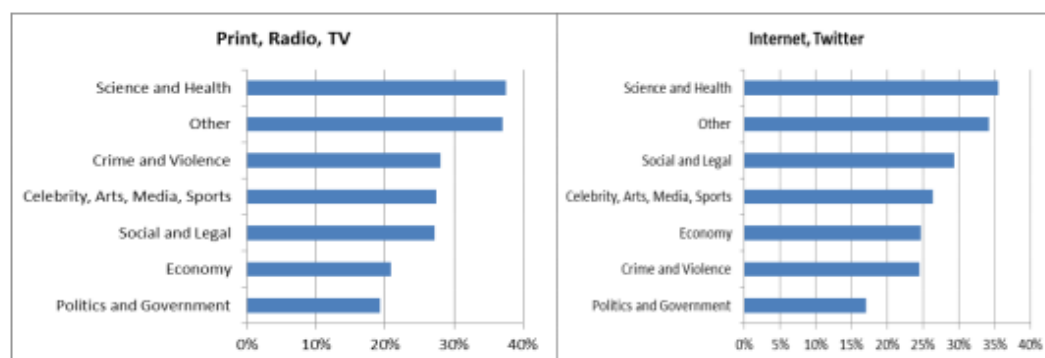| 2015	Function in news story
38%	Personal experience
37%	Popular opinion
30%	Eye witness
26%	Subject
20%	Spokesperson
19%	Expert or commentator
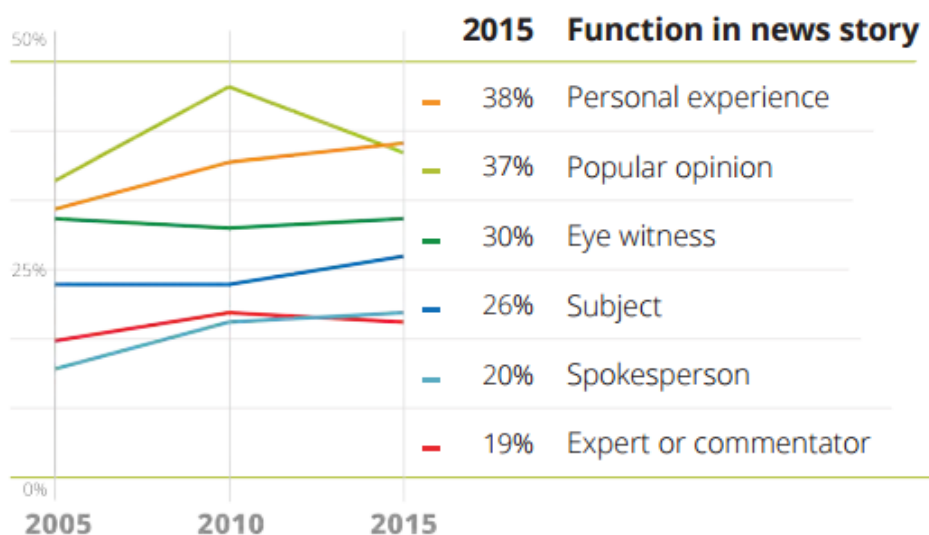
The stated report also analyzes the functions of female news subjects in the 10-year period (2005-2015) showing that only 20% of women in the news have a role of spokesperson and only 19%of women have expert or commentator functions (table 2).

TABLE 3

NEWS SOURCES

Fig. 1 - overall presence of women as news sources and subjects by medium

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6 The Global Media Monitoring Project 2015, Regional report Europe http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2015/regional/Europe.pdf

Table 3 reflects that women who are used as sources in news stories are significantly under-represented in stories in the category of politics/government and the economy, and over-represented in the category science/health, both in linear media and online and twitter stories. The results indicate no change in volume of proportion of women sources since 2010. Women still make up just 24% of the people seen, heard or watched in the news.

These data were also discussed during the Council of Europe Conference on gender equality "Are we there yet"[7] held in Tallinn, Estonia, on 30 June and 1 July 2016 and discussions lead to conclusion that the lack of presence of women in the news is closely linked to the lack of gender culture in the newsrooms.

II.2.1.i   Media education and social norms, values and practices

Media education and media literacy measures with special focus on gender equality and braking stereotypes can help influence social and cultural norms, values and practices. Thus empowerment of girls can lead to more adequate representation of women in decision-making, politics and public life and ultimately their proper portrayal in media content.

Adolescents' views on gender roles are likely to shape their expectations and aspirations for future career and also shape the culture within schools. Gender roles and their relation to education are perpetuated also through the media. For example, national media in the UK drew attention to the impact of the role of single working mothers on low educational attainment This demonstrates how women are singled out for scrutiny for their role in the family, not only when it comes to employment but also in education. Other research identifies in both media accounts and academic research a tendency to blame educational and social inequalities on women, particularly middle class mothers, for making 'hypocritical' choices to work rather than look after children. The focus on mothers represents a shift in research away from the impact of state and organizational cultures within schools. A number of articles in this review examined the gendered impact of bullying and aggression within schools. This body of research commonly identifies bullying as a pervasive and potent experience for students which may affect their educational outcomes"[8]. Bullying takes on many forms and efforts to tackle bullying should also address traditional views on gender roles. Media education and media literacy strengthen citizens' skills, knowledge and provide tools to address interlinked and mutually reinforcing factors such as gender stereotypes, cyber bullying, sexism, hate speech and are beneficial to efforts put in achieving gender equality in media space in general.

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[7] http://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/tallinn-conference

[8] Empowering women and girls through education, Study for the FEMM Committee 2015, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/510022/IPOL_STU(2015)510022_EN.pdf

II.2.2.   Discussion on what constitutes fair and balanced media coverage of election campaigns from the perspective of gender equality

[This needs to be developed. In terms of structure of the document, this section is connected with the recommendations (below): we should avoid repetition.]

What elements/factors to be included in the examination and possible standard-setting regarding media coverage of elections:

- o   Presentation in the media of female candidates;
- o   Participation of female journalists, news presenters, presenters of political programmes, editors, etc. in the election-related topics;
- o   Participation of female panellists, media and political experts, analysts, commentators, etc. in media coverage within the electoral period.

(We should we focus only on female candidates or should we include the latter two categories to obtain a more comprehensive picture of gender representation in media coverage of election).

Part III   Gender equality and media coverage of elections in media policy initiatives and practices from Member States

III.1.   *Regulation, self-regulation and gender equality: initiatives and practices in Member States*

"A further problem concerning the regulation of media coverage relates to its objectives. What kinds of programmes should be regulated? According to which criteria? The main areas of concern are free access, paid political advertisements, news and current affairs coverage, campaign debates, and voter education. Where self-regulation does not provide for this, states should adopt measures to ensure that public and private broadcasters, during the election period, are fair, balanced and impartial in their news and current affairs programmes, including discussion programmes such as interviews or debates."[9]

Self-Regulation: the benchmark of the BBC Rules

The United Kingdom provides the best-known examples of media self-regulation. The fact that these regulations are self-made by the media does not imply a lack of precise guidelines on the ethics and conduct of journalists. The concept of impartiality is stated in the values, standards and principles of the BBC Producers' Guidelines:

Due impartiality lies at the heart of the BBC. It is a core value and no area of programming is exempt from it. All BBC programmes and services should be open-minded, fair and show a respect for truth.

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[9] Recommendation No. R/99/ 15, Committee of Ministers, Council of Europe

The BBC is committed to providing programmes of great diversity that reflect the full range of audiences' interests, beliefs and perspectives. Representing the whole spectrum is a requirement on all programme genres from arts to news and current affairs, from sport to drama, from comedy to documentaries, from entertainment to education and religion. No significant strand of thought should go unreflected or under represented on the BBC.

In order to achieve that range, the BBC is free to make programmes about any subject it chooses, and to make programmes which explore, or are presented from, a particular point of view.

The BBC applies due impartiality to all its broadcasting and services, both to domestic and international audiences. The duty of impartiality has been defined in all the different genres, as well as in the news programmes where, for example, "a reporter may express a professional, journalistic judgment but not a personal opinion. Judgment must be recognized as perceptive and fair. Audiences should not be able to gauge from BBC programmes the personal views of presenters and reporters on controversial issues of public policy.

Considering the allocation of time among political subjects in election periods, the distribution is based on the parliamentary representation (number of seats in Parliament) and on the potential representation, calculated on the number of candidates in the single-mandate constituencies. In a system with a long tradition of democratic values, self-regulation has the advantage of allowing media operators to discuss among themselves and therefore build confidence on the rules without undue interference from the political system.

A mix of internal rules and external regulation: the Italian public broadcaster

In Italy the law on "Dispositions for equal access to mass media and for political communication during electoral and referenda campaign" provided broadcasters (both public and private) with some indications related to political programmes. The implementing rules issued by the "Autorità per le Garanzie delle Comunicazioni" regulated the election campaign on the private and public electronic media. During the 2001 Parliamentary Elections, the Parliamentary Commission of Control (the institutional body supervising the behavior of the public service broadcaster RAI) drafted rules on political communication for RAI. In addition, in 1998 RAI itself issued an internal code of behavior specifying duties and obligations of public service operators. This internal regulation included such issues as the reporting of opinion polls, the duty of fairness and impartiality of journalists hosting debates and political programmes and the duty to balanced treatment for election contestants. In order to evaluate the actual pluralism of its programmes, the public broadcaster organized its own supervision via media monitoring which was carried out by an external institution 111 over the whole year (and not only during the election campaign period).

External regulation: the rules in France

France is well known for having one of the most regulated kinds of election campaigns from a media perspective. The French broadcasting regulatory authority, the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA), usually adopts very detailed rules for media coverage of candidates and parties. Rules provide broadcasters with indications for all programmes including entertainment and newscasts. On the occasion of the 2002 Presidential Election, the CSA

issued a recommendation112 according to which radio and television services had to take care that candidates and those supporting them received equitable access and presentation. The editorial staff were obliged to constantly pay attention to balance and honesty when publishing reports, commentaries and presentations on the elections. The principle of equality applied to newscasts, information programmes and special news editions. As for any other kind of programmes, the CSA strongly recommended that no candidates should be invited at all if the principle of equality could not be respected.

Self-regulatory measures by media professionals - Slovak parliamentary elections in 2002

Given the absence of proper media regulations and the desirability of a fair, peaceful and well-regulated election, and also to avoid aggravating political tension and discord, a Slovak media watchdog MEMO 98 drafted a Code of Conduct for the Media and Political Contestants based on international documents and best practices for the media coverage during the elections. All the registered political parties and a majority of media outlets signed it and voluntarily agreed to adhere to the Code. By signing the Code, political parties and the media made a commitment to accept, respect, observe and contribute to free and fair elections. While the Code was not a legally binding document, MEMO 98 believed that it was better to put public pressure on those who violated the rules of the game, which was much more closely followed by all those who had signed the Code. The breaches of the Code were assessed by an Independent Panel of two Czech media experts as well as by MEMO staff."[10]

If we include social media and online platforms in the study, we should also discuss the methodology for regulation/self-regulation as applicable to them.

III.2. Regulation, self-regulation and gender equality in relation with the coverage of elections: initiatives and practices in Member States

[This section needs to be developed. It is suggested that the experts of the MSI-MED Committee might contribute with information related to their Member States. Other contributions would also be welcome.]

- Are there any existing analyses of the gender representation in media coverage of elections or at least media coverage of political issues that might provide insight into the current situation within the member states of the Council of Europe?

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[10] GUIDELINES ON MEDIA ANALYSIS DURING ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSIONS, Venice Commision CDL-AD(2005)032

Part IV Means of achieving gender equality in media coverage of elections

With regard to the regulatory level, the Council of Europe may call upon member states to consider the effectiveness of their legislative framework and concrete mechanisms for the implementation of strategies and policies to achieve gender equality in the media coverage of electoral campaigns:

- Legislative framework concerning electoral rules and mechanisms to promote women candidates.

- Mechanisms for the implementation of strategies and policies to achieve gender equality in the media coverage of electoral campaigns:

   i.   Electoral mechanisms and rules, such as quotas, incentives, campaign finance laws facilitating the necessary resource mobilization to achieve gender equality etc, can encourage women's participation in politics, with clear repercussions on their visibility in electoral campaigns reported by media;

   ii.   Mechanisms and rules for opinion poll organizations, on which media coverage largely depends;

   iii. Mechanisms and rules in order to support awareness – raising initiatives and campaigns on combating gender stereotypes in the media, as well as to ensure an equal representation of women in political campaigns.

With regard to media, bearing in mind that equal representation of female candidates in the media coverage of electoral campaigns has an impact on the perception of voters and on the electoral procedure itself, media, off-line and on-line, media could be encouraged to set up good practices aiming at:

   i.   Ensuring an equal representation of women and men in political campaigns in respect of women's adequate presence on media;

   ii.   Ensuring that the set-up of shows, selection of guests, time attributed to each guest, role of host, the way shots are framed, allow female candidates to give effective contribution to the debate and to avoid the stereotype which puts men at the centre and women at the margins of politics;

   iii. Avoiding the "tabloidization" of media in terms of the representation of female candidates;

   iv.   Avoiding that women candidates are identified in respect of their family status or their relationship with others ("mother", "wife", "daughter", etc.);

   v.   Avoiding using gender stereotyping or biased language;

   vi.   Making equal gender representation a matter of editorial policy;

   vii. Promoting broadcasting that is inclusive and capable of reaching out to women and that reflects gender-based differences of perspective on the issues at stake;

viii. Promoting the training of journalists on gender aspects so that they are encouraged to publicly highlight issues faced by women candidates;

ix. Monitoring gender commitments made by political parties and reporting on their progress;

x. Monitoring regularly their own output setting targets for an equal gender representation.

Political parties could be encouraged to develop internal policies mindful of a gender equality perspective and to ensure a balanced representation for men and women to off-line and on-line media in electoral campaigns, for example by:

i. Addressing gender equality in the party's legal framework. This can include the adoption of a statement on gender equality in the party's founding documents;

ii. Adopting measures, including internal quotas, that ensure women's participation on governing boards;

iii. Setting targets for participation in party conventions. This can include holding separate forums for women delegates at the conventions;

iv. Establishing women's wings and sections within parties, which should be formally integrated into the party structure, with defined roles and responsibilities and appropriate funding if needed;

v. Ensuring that gender is mainstreamed into all the party's policies;

vi. Ensuring women's visibility in electoral campaigns and access to the media by providing female candidates with the necessary (financial, etc.) support;

vii. Promoting the participation of female candidates in public political debates;

viii. Monitoring regularly their own output setting targets for an equal gender representation in media;

ix. Conducting gender audits ensuring women's equal participation and representation on media;

x. Ensuring that political communication does not give a gender-based stereotyped representation of candidates;

xi. Ensuring that the language used in political communication does not reflect a stereotyped representation of sexes;

xii. Building women's capacity to campaign and participate in media public debates;

xiii. Sensitising party members about gender equality and work with men to promote gender issues in public debates.

Member states should be encouraged to engage in co-operation projects that provide considerable added value towards efforts of member states and neighboring countries to implement gender mainstreaming policies. The Council of Europe is implementing targeted co-operation projects on gender equality issues with the purpose of providing national authorities with information about relevant standards, tools and expertise. Incorporating

activities in the sphere of media coverage of elections in such co-operation projects would be beneficial.

Member states should be encouraged to implement measures envisaged in Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on gender equality and media and: develop training modules for media professionals, organizations and self-regulatory bodies; encompass the obligation to continuously review the composition of editorial teams and the assignment of political subjects to journalists, taking proper account of gender breakdown; encourage and support the establishment of a European network of researchers on gender equality in the media and include activities and events to publicize their work among the media, governments and research centers.

Conclusions/Recommendations

[There is an important option to be discussed here: Do we need a standard-setting instrument on gender equality in media coverage of elections, could the means be achieved through rigorous implementation of already existing standards, etc. At present, existing instruments do not specifically cover the topic of the study (gender equality in media coverage of elections). A possibility would be to revise existing instruments to include that additional perspective. Another possibility is to draft a new instrument.]

Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)15 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures concerning media coverage of election campaigns apart from non-discrimination principle mentioned as a broader notion encompassing gender equality, does not contain special focus on gender equality in terms of media coverage. The fact is that there is a gender dimension to media pluralism and diversity of content which needs to be brought to attention of member states in the context of media coverage of elections, such as gender balance statements, angle from which the story is told, pluralism of sources, gender representation, and gender portrayals. This provides the opportunity for Council of Europe through CDMSI and MSI-MED work respectively to address this issue in the form of a revision of the stated Recommendation or through production of a new standard-setting document.

Vast range of instruments and standards that address gender equality in the field of politics, media and media coverage of electoral campaigns are in place but there is need to continuously examine their implementation across the member states in the Council of Europe in order to acquire accurate overview on the implementation process, environmental changes and obstacles faced in gender mainstreaming. As gender equality is a cross-cutting issue, the enlisted instruments are in most member states to be implemented across several sectors and therefore at some member states this may hinder prompt and proper implementation. The production of a new comprehensive standard setting document would provide opportunity to better reflect and address rapid changes in media environment and incorporate gender mainstreaming policy while it would benefit member states and their efforts regarding the implementation of gender equality standards and measures in the domain of media coverage of elections.

Appendix – The standard-setting instruments of the Council of Europe

GENDER EQUALITY IN ELECTORAL PROCESS IS GOVERNED BY THE FOLLOWING INSTRUMENTS:

- Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 1950 (CETS No.005) and its Protocol No.12, 2000 (CETS No.177);

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 (ICCPR);

- United Nations, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979 (CEDAW);

- UNESO Gender Sensitive Indicators for Media GSIM 2012;

- OSCE, Moscow Document, 1991;

- Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, declaration on equality between women and men, 1997;

- Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation (2003)3on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, 2003;

- Council of Europe, Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017, including the objective to achieve a balanced participation in political and public decision-making and gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures;

- OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission, Guidelines on political party regulation, 2010 ([CDL-AD(2010)024](#));

THE FOLLOWING VENICE COMMISSION DOCUMENTS:

- 2002, Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters (CDL-AD(2002)023rev);

- 2006, Declaration on Women's Participation in Elections (CDL-AD(2006)020);

- 2009, Report on the Impact of Electoral Systems on Women's Representation in Politics (CDL-AD(2009)029);

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WHEN IT COMES TO MEDIA COVERAGE AND GENDER EQUALITY IT IS GOVERNED BY HEREAFTER STATED INSTRUMENTS:

- Recommendation [CM/Rec(2007)15](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures concerning media coverage of election campaigns;

- Recommendation [No. R (99) 15](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on measures concerning media coverage of election campaigns;

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

- [Handbook](#) on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 on gender equality and media;

- [Recommendation 1931 (2010)](#) and [Resolution 1751 (2010)](#) on Combating sexist stereotypes in the media, Parliamentary Assembly, 25 June 2010;

- [Resolution 1557](#) and [Recommendation 1799 (2007)](#) on the image of women in advertising, Parliamentary Assembly, 2007;

- Recommendation [CM/Rec(96)10](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the guarantee of the independence of public service broadcasting;

- Recommendation [CM/Rec(2007)3](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the remit of public service media in the information society;

- Recommendation [CM/Rec(2004)16](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on right of reply in the new media environment;

- The Recommendation [CM/Rec(2007)2](#) on media pluralism and diversity of media content;

- Recommendation [CM/Rec(2011)7](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on a new notion of media