



**R U L E B O O K**  
**on media representation and public advertising of political subjects during the  
election period**

Sarajevo, May 2024

Pursuant to Article 16.18 of the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Official Gazette of BiH, number: 23/01, 7/02, 9/02, 20/02, 25/02, 4/04, 20/04, 25/05, 52/05, 65/05, 77/05, 11/06, 24/06, 32/07, 33/08, 37/08, 32/10, 18/13, 7/14, 31/16, 41/20, 38/22, 51/22, 67/22 and 24/24), Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina has at its 20<sup>th</sup> session held on May 3, 2024 passed

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**CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION**

**Article 1**  
**(Scope)**

The Rulebook on media representation and public advertising of political subjects during the election period (hereinafter: the Rulebook) shall in more detail regulate implementation of the provisions of Chapter 16 “Media in the election campaign” of the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina and certain provisions of Chapter 7 “Rules of conduct in the election period” of the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter: the BiH Election Law).

**Article 2**  
**(Definitions)**

For the purpose of interpretation and application of this Rulebook, definitions and acronyms in this Rulebook shall have the following meaning:

- a) Election period shall mean the period from the day the elections are announced to the day when the election results are validated.
- b) Premature election campaign shall mean all forms of campaign actions taken by political subjects in the period between the announcement of elections and the period of the official start of the election campaign.
- c) Election campaign shall mean actions and procedures in the period starting 30 days before election day and ending upon commencement of period of twenty-four (24) hours prior to opening of the Polling Stations during which a political subject informs the voters and the public, as prescribed by the Law, about their programs and candidates for the forthcoming elections
- d) Official start of election campaign shall mean the day when the election campaign officially starts.
- e) CRA is the Communications Regulatory Agency.
- f) The CRA rules shall entail all rules passed by the CRA, governing the broadcasting of RTV programs.
- g) Political subject shall mean a political party, independent candidate, coalition or list of independent candidates certified in accordance with the BiH Election Law. Political subject under this Rulebook shall also be an association, i.e. any other registered form of action of national minorities and groups of at least 40 citizens who have the voting right and who participate in the elections in terms of Article 13.14 of the BiH Election Law.
- h) Political advertising shall mean broadcast and publication of advertisements, public calls, video spots and any other form of public advertising by a political subject.
- i) Public advertising shall mean advertising through media, billboards, posters, Internet, leaflets, bizz boards and any other form of advertising available to the voters and public.
- j) The term “Seat of the institution” as defined in Article 16.5, paragraph (1), point b) of the BiH Election Law shall denote the indication of the city and country where an institution has its principal office.

- k) Print media shall mean printed publications, such as newspapers, tabloids, magazines, books, pamphlets, which serve as a means of mass communication aimed at disseminating information of public interest.
- l) “Online media” in the sense of this Rulebook shall mean internet portals and other online platforms, which serve as a means of mass communication aimed at disseminating information of public interest.
- m) Electronic media in the sense of this Rulebook shall mean public and private television and radio stations that hold a valid license issued by the CRA.
- n) Social networks are internet or mobile platforms that facilitate two-way interaction through user-generated content and communication. They encompass media accessible on specific platforms intended to enable users to create content and engage with information and its origins
- o) The Press and Online Media Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a self-regulatory body for print and online media.

**Article 3**  
**(False information in the electoral process)**

- (1) The political subjects shall not spread false information by way of media that could compromise the integrity of the election process and misinform the voters.
- (2) In case of violation of the provisions of paragraph (1) of this Article, the Central Election Commission of BiH shall be authorized to conduct the procedure.
- (3) The media shall inform the public about the course and outcome of the procedure referred to in paragraph (2) of this Article.

**Article 4**  
**(Reporting of electronic media on activities of the officials)**

- (1) In broadcasts of the electronic media, no political subject shall have a privileged position with respect to another political subject.
- (2) Officials at all levels of government who are candidates in elections shall not have a privileged position over other participants in the electoral process.
- (3) Reporting on the routine activities of officials at all levels of government shall be permitted within the informational programming of electronic media, provided their candidacy and party affiliation are neither directly nor indirectly mentioned, particularly when the coverage pertains to activities falling within the legally defined scope of their responsibilities.
- (4) The electronic media shall diligently uphold principles of balance, equal access, honesty, and impartiality in news broadcasts, particularly in current affairs coverage, interviews, and discussions on political topics such as round tables and other debate shows that may not be directly related to electoral activities of political subjects, but could influence voter sentiment.

**Article 5**  
**(Ownership structure in online media)**

- (1) Online media that opt to cover the election campaign shall disclose their ownership transparently and provide impartial, professional coverage of election activities, and adhere to journalistic codes and uphold widely accepted democratic principles and rules, particularly the fundamental principle of freedom of expression.

(2) Online media platforms shall include detailed ownership information, including the media's structure, the names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, and contacts of the responsible publisher and editor, whom can receive appeals and complaints regarding content published by online media outlets.

**Article 6**  
**(Use of gender-specific expressions)**

For transparency, the terms used in this Rulebook shall equally apply to both genders without any discrimination.

**CHAPTER II. PERIOD FROM THE DAY ELECTIONS ARE ANNOUNCED UNTIL THE OFFICIAL START OF ELECTION CAMPAIGN**

**Article 7**  
**(Prohibition of conducting paid election campaign for political subjects)**

(1) In the period from the day elections are announced until the official start of election campaign political subject shall be prohibited to conduct campaign, as well as paid political advertising through the electronic media, online media, print media and social networks or any other type of paid advertising, except for paid political advertising on internal meetings of authorities and statutory bodies of political subjects.

(2) Authorities and statutory bodies of a political subject, within the meaning of the BiH Election Law, shall mean authority and a body defined by the political subject's Statute (presidency, main board, assembly, congress, convention, etc.).

**Article 8**  
**(Prohibition to broadcast and publish paid election campaign for the media)**

In the period from the day elections are announced until the official start of election campaign the media outlets shall be prohibited to broadcast and publish paid political advertisements, except for paid political advertisements by which members of authority and statutory bodies of political subjects are informed about time and place of internal meetings of authorities and statutory bodies of political subjects, under equal conditions for all political subjects.

**Article 9**  
**(Prohibition to conduct premature election campaign for political subjects)**

(1) During the premature election period, political subject are prohibited from engaging in any campaign activities that the political subjects undertake from the announcement of the election until the official start of the election campaign.

(2) This prohibition, as stated in paragraph (1) of this Article, pertains to efforts by political subjects to introduce voters and the public to their programs and candidates for the upcoming elections.

(3) The restriction outlined in paragraph (1) of this Article does not preclude political subjects from organizing lawful official meetings of their bodies and events for purposes unrelated to campaigning.

## **CHAPTER III. ELECTION CAMPAIGN PERIOD**

### **Article 10 (Publicizing results of public opinion research)**

- (1) Prohibitions set in Article 16.10 and 16.11 of the BiH Election Law shall apply to all media in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- (2) Prohibitions set forth in paragraph (1) of this Article shall also refer to publishing earlier prepared, already broadcasted or printed contents.

### **Article 11 (Informing political subjects)**

It shall be deemed that the electronic media informed a political subject about the time of participation in special shows under the condition that the notice can be documented.

### **Article 12 (Direct promotion)**

- (1) Public electronic media shall establish duration of direct promotion based on present practice, number of political subjects and other relevant circumstances, but in a manner as to provide at least three (3) minutes of direct promotion in the election campaign to each political entity.
- (2) Each political subjects shall be provided equal time for direct promotion.
- (3) Time slots for direct promotion shall be set during the time when it is most probable to have the highest outreach.
- (4) Sequence of political subjects' participation in direct promotion shall be established by the public electronic media through a lottery no later than seven days prior to the commencement of the election campaign. Political subjects shall be informed about date and time of the lottery draw, and they may be present there.
- (5) Once established time slots in the electronic media's shows may not be changed.
- (6) Public radio and television stations must ensure a direct address for all political subjects registered in the constituency belonging to the administrative-territorial unit that is the founder of the public electronic media.
- (7) Public television stations must broadcast a direct address in a format accessible to visually/hearing impaired people. Accessibility is achieved, among other things, by interpretation into sign language, subtitling or audio description.
- (8) The provisions of this Article are also applied to private radio and television stations if they decide to organize a direct address to political subjects, taking into account the headquarters of the electronic media, the programming direction and the target audience.

**Article 13**  
**(Paid political advertising)**

- (1) Paid political advertising shall be allowed in the period from the beginning of official campaign until the start of election silence, namely in the period 30 days before the Election Day.
- (2) Prices for political advertising must be the same for all political subjects, and the price lists shall be submitted to the CRA and to certified political subjects 15 days before official commencement of the election campaign.
- (3) Time slots for paid political advertising shall be established by the electronic media no later than seven days before commencement of the election campaign. The media shall have clear rules on decision-making regarding sequence and time in which the political advertisements will be broadcasted. In case of a dispute regarding the sequence and the time of political advertisements broadcast, the electronic media shall solve that by agreement with the political entity and subsequently if necessary by the lottery.
- (4) Paid political advertisements are clearly marked as such and are not broadcast immediately before, during or immediately after news broadcasts.
- (5) The slots referred to in paragraph (4) of this Article shall mean period of 15 minutes before and after news broadcast.
- (6) If political subjects cannot organize production of their political spots by themselves, they can seek provision of such services from the electronic media. The media may charge such productions. Fees, which are charged in this case, must be the same for all political subjects at the same level of services.
- (7) Electronic media shall have the right to refuse to broadcast a political advertisement in case that:
  - a) advertising was not ordered through a written order;
  - b) advertising does not meet technical and professional standards that are clearly established and about which political subjects are informed in a timely manner,
  - c) the advertisement includes any discrimination or prejudice based on sex, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, disability, special needs, age, sexual orientation, social background, or any other content which has the purpose or effect to nullify or to impair the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of any person's rights and freedoms;
  - d) the advertisement demeans, intimidates or incites to violence or discrimination against a person or a group based on sex, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, disability, special needs, age, sexual orientation, social background or any other circumstance which has the purpose or effect to nullify or to impair the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of any person's rights and freedoms;
  - e) advertising includes the participation of minors
  - f) if advertising is in violation of CRA regulations.

(8) If the electronic media consider that the content of the ordered paid political advertising falls under points c), d), e) and f) of paragraph (7) of this Article, they may contact the CRA, which will issue a binding opinion regarding the content.

(9) If the electronic media refuse the publication of paid political advertising, citing points c), d), e) and f) of paragraph (7) of this Article as the reason, the political entity whose advertisement was rejected has the right to contact CRA, which will issue a binding content opinion.

(10) The CRA issues a binding opinion referred to in paragraphs (8) and (9) of this Article no later than within 48 hours, and shall notify the Central Election Commission of BiH thereof.

#### **Article 14** **(Promotion of candidates of both genders)**

(1) Political subjects during the election campaign period are required to ensure equal promotion of candidates of both genders in media appearances, public meetings, and other forms of election campaigning, aimed at achieving gender equality among candidates.

(3) Throughout the election campaign, political subjects shall strive to achieve equal representation of their candidates in presenting their political programs through both public and private electronic media.

#### **Article 15** **(Removing posters and other materials)**

The political subject shall ensure that all advertisements, placards, posters, and similar materials used for its election campaign are removed from designated spaces within 15 days following the Election Day. During the election campaign period, political subjects are required to promote candidates of both genders equally in media appearances, public meetings, and other campaign activities to ensure gender equality among candidates.

#### **Article 16** **(The plan and schedule for broadcasting a political program)**

(1) Electronic media shall send the schedule of planned political programs to the CRA at least seven (7) days earlier. All changes of planned programs or political shows planned at short notice shall be reported to the CRA as soon as possible.

(2) Electronic media shall keep a detailed record of time schedule of political advertisement broadcast, time schedule and the content of political programs, and of political events coverage, and such records shall be available to the public. Such records shall be submitted to the CRA every Monday for the previous week. The record shall include a report on received and realized requests for paid political advertising. At any time, the CRA can ask the media for the summary report of all political advertisements and political programs, as well as for the report on time provided to each political subject.

## **CHAPTER IV. PUBLIC ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND THE BIH CENTRAL ELECTION COMMISSION**

### **Article 17 (Public electronic media)**

- (1) The public electronic media shall broadcast radio and TV ads, entire statements and information by the Central Election Commission of BiH free of charge for the purpose of informing voters about all aspects of the electoral process.
- (2) If the public electronic media refuse to act in accordance with paragraph (1) of this Article, the Central Election Commission of BiH shall file a report with the Communications Regulatory Agency for competent action.
- (3) The BiH Central Election Commission shall inform electronic media in a timely fashion about time period of broadcasting radio and TV ads, statements and press releases of the BiH CEC, including their recurrence.

## **CHAPTER V. STEREOTYPE AND OFFENSIVE CONTENTS**

### **Article 18 (Prohibition of stereotypical and offensive content)**

No conduct of an election campaign shall be allowed by way of media where the contents are stereotype and offensive against men and/or women or which encourages any stereotype and offensive behavior on the grounds of gender or any humiliating attitude against the members of different genders.

### **Article 19 (Competence to conduct the procedure)**

- (1) As the body competent for monitoring the work of broadcasters, CRA shall apply its Rulebook for handling the cases of violation of licenses' conditions and regulations of the Communication Regulatory Agency (Official Gazette of BiH, no.77/21) in case when electronic media fail to respect provisions of Chapter 16 of the BiH Election Law and of the provisions of this Rulebook.
- (2) Political subjects shall refer their objections to the content in print and online media in connection with monitoring the election campaign to the Press and Online Media Council, based on the Code for Print and Online Media and the corresponding guidelines of the Council for reporting on elections, and in accordance with the procedures of the Council.
- (3) Appeals of political subjects on the reporting of print and online media in BiH will be resolved by the Appeals Commission of the Press and Online Media Council in BiH under an urgent procedure.
- (4) The Central Election Commission of BiH is competent to adjudicate complaints for violations of Chapter 16 of the BiH Election Law made by a political subject.



**Article 20**  
**(Ineffectiveness)**

Effectiveness of the Rulebook on media coverage of political subjects from the day elections are announced until the Election Day (Official Gazette of BiH, number: 27/22) shall be terminated on the day of entry into force of this Rulebook.

**Article 21**  
**(Entry into force and publication in Official Gazettes)**

This Rulebook shall enter into force on the day of its enactment, and shall be published Official Gazette of BiH, Official Gazette of FBiH, Official Gazette of RS, Official Gazette of Brčko District of BiH and on the website of the BiH Central Election Commission, [www.izbori.ba](http://www.izbori.ba).

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Sarajevo, May 3, 2024

President

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