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**INTERIM REPORT ON THE MONITORING
OF ARMENIAN BROADCAST MEDIA COVERAGE
OF THE DECEMBER 6, 2015 REFERENDUM ON
AMENDMENTS TO THE RA CONSTITUTION**

(October 26 - November 5, 2015)



YEREVAN PRESS CLUB

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INTERIM REPORT ON THE MONITORING OF ARMENIAN BROADCAST MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE DECEMBER 6, 2015 REFERENDUM ON AMENDMENTS TO THE RA CONSTITUTION

(October 26 - November 5, 2015)

Monitoring of Armenian national TV channels' coverage of the promotion campaign preceding the referendum on amendments to the RA Constitution is carried out from October 26 to December 4, 2015 by Yerevan Press Club within the framework of the Joint Project between the European Union and the Council of Europe "Promote Professional and Responsible Journalism by Supporting Regional Network of Self-Regulatory Bodies".

The study includes the main news and discussion programmes of the First Channel of Public Television of Armenia, as well as five private TV channels - "Armenia", "Yerkir Media", Second Armenian TV Channel, "Kentron" and "Shant".

Through analysis of the content of the above-mentioned broadcasters' programmes and analysis of the collected quantitative data the monitoring seeks to determine the following:

- to what extent in the programmes studied, as well as in the units of free or paid promotion related to the referendum, relevant requirements of the RA legislation have been accomplished;
- to what extent the programmes studied have reflected the diversity of opinions regarding the draft amendments to the RA Constitution;
- to what extent the audience of Armenian TV channels in general and each of the TV channels in particular has received an opportunity to get acquainted to various positions regarding the draft amendments to the RA Constitution.

The first 11 days of the monitoring are not sufficient for making far-reaching conclusions regarding the coverage of the campaign by the TV channels studied. Especially, taking into account that in spite of the official commencement of the promotion campaign from October 10, certain broadcasters and political forces could have postponed active involvement in the discussion until November 6, when the allocation of free and paid airtime for campaign to the parliamentary factions was scheduled. Overall, only a little more than 6% of all the studied pieces were devoted to the topic of the monitoring.

At the same time it is possible to note the main tendencies of the coverage. The discussion regarding the amendments to the Main Law was mostly concentrated on the initiative of transition from a presidential (or semi-presidential) form of governance to a parliamentary republic. The very fact that citizens of Armenia were offered to vote for the complete text without an opportunity to introduce their attitude to separate provisions of the draft, inevitably led to reduction of interest in the discussion of topics not directly related to the changes in the system of governance.

The studied period also coincided with intensification of discussions regarding the procedure of voting on the December 6 referendum, particularly, the eligibility of voting with ID cards. And a significant part of references to the referendum on amendments to the Constitution was related to this topic. In other words, the initial phase of the campaign

reflected the general political orientations rather than the attitude towards the content of the amendments to the Main Law.

Among the broadcasters studied it was “Yerkir Media” that displayed the highest degree of interest towards the coverage of the topic. As the attached tables show, this broadcaster’s share was about half of the total airtime of all six channels allocated to factions/parties represented in the RA National Assembly (further referred to as “first category”), as well as more than half of the airtime allocated to other political forces, civil society organizations, expert circles, civic initiatives and individual citizens (further referred to as “second category”).

According to this indicator (summing up both categories), the second place was taken by “Kentron” TV channel, third by “Armenia”, fourth by the First Channel of Public Television of Armenia (PTA). Second Armenian TV Channel and “Shant” paid limited attention to the topic studied: together their share was a little more than 5% of the cumulative airtime of the 6 broadcasters’ studied programmes, allocated to the referendum on amendments to the RA Constitution. Moreover, when it comes to the frequency of pieces related to the topic of the referendum, both these channels do not lag behind the others, which points to their limited involvement in a profound, in-depth discussion at the initial stage of the promotion campaign.

Of the 6 parliamentary factions, which, according to the renewed RA Law “On Referendum”, have been identified as the main actors of the promotion campaign in the media, the programmes studied have most often referred to representatives of the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA), followed by representatives of the Armenian National Congress (ANC), Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutyun, “Orinats Yerkir”, “Prosperous Armenia” and “Heritage”. In the case of the latter, the split within the party regarding the amendments to the Constitution, which resulted in differences between the positions of the party and the majority of the members of its parliamentary faction, also apparently affected representation of that political force on the TV air. In particular, during the period from October 26 to November 5, it did not receive any editorial airtime in the studied programmes devoted to the topic of the monitoring on the PTA First Channel and “Armenia”. Besides, on two TV channels (“Armenia” and “Yerkir Media”) the “Prosperous Armenia” party did not receive editorial airtime, but in this case, probably, the main cause of this was the limited level of participation of its representatives in discussions on the topic. The position of “Orinats Yerkir” on the amendments to the Constitution did not receive any coverage on “Kentron” TV channel.

By the way, when it came to cumulative volume of editorial time, as opposed to the frequency of references, the leader was ARF-Dashnaktsutyun. According to this indicator, as seen from the tables attached, on various TV channels the leaders were various factions/parties represented in the RA National Assembly. In particular, RPA is leading in the airtime of “Yerkir Media” and “Shant”, ANC on “Armenia” and Second Armenian TV Channel, “Orinats Yerkir” on the PTA First Channel, and ARF-Dashnaktsutyun on “Kentron”. However, this does not allow to make any conclusions, since even a single appearance of a representative of one of the parties in a discussion programme could have influenced the overall picture during the 11 days of the monitoring.

Within “the second category” it was the representatives of what can be called “non-political segment” (NGOs, experts, non-formal civic activists), who were the most active. At the same time, certain broadcasters (“Armenia”, Second Armenian TV Channel) did not allocate any airtime to that group in the programmes studied, and PTA First Channel did

not manifest any interest towards the positions of two civic initiatives that had emerged in the context of the amendments to the Constitution (“No pasaran!” and Front of Public Salvation “New Armenia”). On “Yerkir Media” and “Shant” there was a lack of attention towards another group: independent MPs and representatives of non-parliamentary parties.

Of all 333 references to the theme of the monitoring 68 contained positive attitude to the draft of amendments to the Constitution (as well as its possible adoption), 84 contained negative attitude, 181 were neutral. (It is important to stress here that assessments of the procedure of the referendum, including the actively discussed issue of ID cards voting, were not recorded as connotation references. References to this issue, even though sharp criticism prevailed among them, were recorded as neutral, since they did not contain direct attitude to the draft of amendments to the Constitution.)

Within “the first category” positive references to the amendments to the Main Law received advantage, while the balance of actors was equal: representatives of RPA, “Prosperous Armenia” and ARF-Dashnaktsutyun made statements in favor of the draft and its adoption, while ANC, “Orinats Yerkir” and “Heritage” (with the exception of one case) made statements against it. Within “the second category” negative references had a significant advantage. Moreover, among NGOs/experts/non-formal activists, as well as civic initiatives created in connection with the amendments to the Constitution, the balance was sharply negative (against the draft and its adoption). Within the group of independent MPs and non-parliamentary parties positive references received a minimal advantage, while connotation references of individual citizens (vox populi) were recorded as a part of reporting on a sociological poll.

Within what can be called “the third category” (i.e., media/journalists and government-level international organizations/official representatives of foreign countries), in the absence of negative references, there were 3 positive references recorded, all on the part of representatives of international community. Speaking about this category, it is necessary to note that direct references of representatives of the media themselves were extremely rare and limited, and there were no connotation references among them.

In the studied programmes of two TV channels (PTA First Channel and “Kentron”), references in favor of the Constitution draft and its adoption were in advantage, on “Armenia” the balance was equal, and on the other three channels statements “against” were in advantage.

It is also necessary to note that the results of the monitoring from October 26 to November 5, 2015 allow to make a preliminary conclusion about certain imperfection of the legal-normative framework of the promotion campaign for the referendum. The monitoring group will address that issue in the upcoming reports.

TABLES
October 26 - November 5, 2015

October 26 - November 5, 2015

Airtime, number of mentionings/citations, references and attitudes of group representatives to the amendments to the RA Constitution in TV programs

First Channel of Public Television of Armenia (h1), "Armenia", "Yerkir Media", Second Armenian TV Channel (h2), "Kentron", "Shant"

Total amount of TV pieces studied			1483				
Amount of TV pieces devoted to the topic of the monitoring			94				
Groups			Airtime allocated to statements of representatives of the group regarding the amendments to the RA Constitution (sec.)	Number of mentionings/citations of statements/positions on the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)	Attitude of the representatives of the group to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)		
					+	-	0
1.	Factions/parties represented in the National Assembly of Armenia	"Republican" (RPA)	3734.1	87	30	0	57
		"Prosperous Armenia"	219.6	20	8	0	12
		"Armenian National Congress"	3271.1	56	0	20	36
		"Orinats Yerkir"	3203.6	27	0	8	19
		"Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutyun"	4084.1	37	13	0	24
		"Heritage"	1926.5	19	1	10	8
Total of group 1			16439	246	52	38	156
2.	Independent members of National Assembly of Armenia and non-parliamentary parties		721	19	7	6	6
3.	Civil society, expert community, non-formal civic activists		4298	30	3	16	11
4.	Representatives of initiatives formed in connection with the amendments to the RA Constitution	Civic initiative "No pasaran!"	1287	7	0	7	0
		Front of Public Salvation "New Armenia"	159	14	0	14	0
5.	Vox Populi		1085	6	3	3	0
Total of the groups 2-5			7550	76	13	46	17
			Airtime allocated for expression of opinion regarding the amendments to the RA Constitution (sec.)	Number of references to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)	Nature of references to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)		
					+	-	0
6.	Media and journalists		8	3	0	0	3
7.	Government-level international organizations and official representatives of foreign countries		246	8	3	0	5
Total of the groups 6-7			254	11	3	0	8

October 26 - November 5, 2015

Airtime, number of mentionings/citations, references and attitudes of group representatives to the amendments to the RA Constitution in TV programs

First Channel of Public Television of Armenia (h1)

Total amount of TV pieces studied			332				
Amount of TV pieces devoted to the topic of the monitoring			14				
Groups			Airtime allocated to statements of representatives of the group regarding the amendments to the RA Constitution (sec.)	Number of mentionings/citations of statements/positions on the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)	Attitude of the representatives of the group to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)		
					+	-	0
1.	Factions/parties represented in the National Assembly of Armenia	"Republican" (RPA)	364.6	6	5	0	1
		"Prosperous Armenia"	140.6	3	3	0	0
		"Armenian National Congress"	126.1	3	0	2	1
		"Orinats Yerkir"	1299.6	2	0	2	0
		"Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutyun"	47.6	1	1	0	0
		"Heritage"	0	1	0	0	1
Total of group 1			1978.5	16	9	4	3
2.	Independent members of National Assembly of Armenia and non-parliamentary parties		204	2	1	1	0
3.	Civil society, expert community, non-formal civic activists		210.5	6	1	1	4
4.	Representatives of initiatives formed in connection with the amendments to the RA Constitution	Civic initiative "No pasaran!"	0	0	0	0	0
		Front of Public Salvation "New Armenia"	0	0	0	0	0
5.	Vox Populi		89	2	1	1	0
Total of the groups 2-5			503.5	10	3	3	4
			Airtime allocated for expression of opinion regarding the amendments to the RA Constitution (sec.)	Number of references to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)	Nature of references to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)		
					+	-	0
6.	Media and journalists		8	1	0	0	1
7.	Government-level international organizations and official representatives of foreign countries		40	2	0	0	2
Total of the groups 6-7			48	3	0	0	3

October 26 - November 5, 2015

Airtime, number of mentionings/citations, references and attitudes of group representatives to the amendments to the RA Constitution in TV programs

“Armenia”

Total amount of TV pieces studied			234				
Amount of TV pieces devoted to the topic of the monitoring			17				
Groups			Airtime allocated to statements of representatives of the group regarding the amendments to the RA Constitution (sec.)	Number of mentionings/ citations of statements/positions on the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)	Attitude of the representatives of the group to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)		
					+	-	0
1.	Factions/parties represented in the National Assembly of Armenia	“Republican” (RPA)	118	17	3	0	14
		“Prosperous Armenia”	0	2	0	0	2
		“Armenian National Congress”	2597	10	0	3	7
		“Orinats Yerkir”	12	6	0	1	5
		“Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutyun”	61	4	0	0	4
		“Heritage”	0	5	0	1	4
Total of group 1			2788	44	3	5	36
2.	Independent members of National Assembly of Armenia and non-parliamentary parties		252	7	3	1	3
3.	Civil society, expert community, non-formal civic activists		0	1	0	0	1
4.	Representatives of initiatives formed in connection with the amendments to the RA Constitution	Civic initiative “No pasaran!”	0	1	0	1	0
		Front of Public Salvation “New Armenia”	0	2	0	2	0
5.	Vox Populi		151	2	1	1	0
Total of the groups 2-5			403	13	4	5	4
			Airtime allocated for expression of opinion regarding the amendments to the RA Constitution (sec.)	Number of references to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)	Nature of references to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)		
					+	-	0
6.	Media and journalists		0	1	0	0	1
7.	Government-level international organizations and official representatives of foreign countries		168	4	3	0	1
Total of the groups 6-7			168	5	3	0	2

October 26 - November 5, 2015

Airtime, number of mentionings/citations, references and attitudes of group representatives to the amendments to the RA Constitution in TV programs

“Yerkir Media”

Total amount of TV pieces studied			252				
Amount of TV pieces devoted to the topic of the monitoring			18				
Groups			Airtime allocated to statements of representatives of the group regarding the amendments to the RA Constitution (sec.)	Number of mentionings/ citations of statements/positions on the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)	Attitude of the representatives of the group to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)		
					+	-	0
1.	Factions/parties represented in the National Assembly of Armenia	“Republican” (RPA)	2488.5	25	8	0	17
		“Prosperous Armenia”	0	2	0	0	2
		“Armenian National Congress”	109	12	0	5	7
		“Orinats Yerkir”	1774	3	0	1	2
		“Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutyun”	1945.5	12	4	0	8
		“Heritage”	1812.5	3	1	2	0
Total of group 1			8129.5	57	13	8	36
2.	Independent members of National Assembly of Armenia and non-parliamentary parties		0	0	0	0	0
3.	Civil society, expert community, non-formal civic activists		3623.5	9	0	8	1
4.	Representatives of initiatives formed in connection with the amendments to the RA Constitution	Civic initiative “No pasaran!”	1235	2	0	2	0
		Front of Public Salvation “New Armenia”	0	3	0	3	0
5.	Vox Populi		0	0	0	0	0
Total of the groups 2-5			4858.5	14	0	13	1
			Airtime allocated for expression of opinion regarding the amendments to the RA Constitution (sec.)	Number of references to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)	Nature of references to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)		
					+	-	0
6.	Media and journalists		0	0	0	0	0
7.	Government-level international organizations and official representatives of foreign countries		38	1	0	0	1
Total of the groups 6-7			38	1	0	0	1

October 26 - November 5, 2015

Airtime, number of mentionings/citations, references and attitudes of group representatives to the amendments to the RA Constitution in TV programs

Second Armenian TV Channel (h2)

Total amount of TV pieces studied			253				
Amount of TV pieces devoted to the topic of the monitoring			12				
Groups			Airtime allocated to statements of representatives of the group regarding the amendments to the RA Constitution (sec.)	Number of mentionings/ citations of statements/positions on the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)	Attitude of the representatives of the group to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)		
					+	-	0
1.	Factions/parties represented in the National Assembly of Armenia	"Republican" (RPA)	88	13	2	0	11
		"Prosperous Armenia"	8	3	0	0	3
		"Armenian National Congress"	121	11	0	4	7
		"Orinats Yerkir"	83	5	0	2	3
		"Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutyun"	89	6	2	0	4
		"Heritage"	45	3	0	3	0
Total of group 1			434	41	4	9	28
2.	Independent members of National Assembly of Armenia and non-parliamentary parties		82	3	1	1	1
3.	Civil society, expert community, non-formal civic activists		0	1	0	1	0
4.	Representatives of initiatives formed in connection with the amendments to the RA Constitution	Civic initiative "No pasaran!"	0	1	0	1	0
		Front of Public Salvation "New Armenia"	140	4	0	4	0
5.	Vox Populi		0	0	0	0	0
Total of the groups 2-5			222	9	1	7	1
			Airtime allocated for expression of opinion regarding the amendments to the RA Constitution (sec.)	Number of references to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)	Nature of references to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)		
					+	-	0
6.	Media and journalists		0	0	0	0	0
7.	Government-level international organizations and official representatives of foreign countries		0	0	0	0	0
Total of the groups 6-7			0	0	0	0	0

Airtime, number of mentionings/citations, references and attitudes of group representatives to the amendments to the RA Constitution in TV programs

“Kentron”

Total amount of TV pieces studied			251				
Amount of TV pieces devoted to the topic of the monitoring			20				
Groups			Airtime allocated to statements of representatives of the group regarding the amendments to the RA Constitution (sec.)	Number of mentionings/ citations of statements/positions on the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)	Attitude of the representatives of the group to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)		
					+	-	0
1.	Factions/parties represented in the National Assembly of Armenia	“Republican” (RPA)	525	17	10	0	7
		“Prosperous Armenia”	42	6	3	0	3
		“Armenian National Congress”	232	9	0	4	5
		“Orinats Yerkir”	0	5	0	1	4
		“Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutyun”	1876	7	4	0	3
		“Heritage”	50	3	0	2	1
Total of group 1			2725	47	17	7	23
2.	Independent members of National Assembly of Armenia and non-parliamentary parties		183	4	2	2	0
3.	Civil society, expert community, non-formal civic activists		261	9	1	4	4
4.	Representatives of initiatives formed in connection with the amendments to the RA Constitution	Civic initiative “No pasaran!”	52	2	0	2	0
		Front of Public Salvation “New Armenia”	0	2	0	2	0
5.	Vox Populi		845	2	1	1	0
Total of the groups 2-5			1341	19	4	11	4
			Airtime allocated for expression of opinion regarding the amendments to the RA Constitution (sec.)	Number of references to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)	Nature of references to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)		
					+	-	0
6.	Media and journalists		0	1	0	0	1
7.	Government-level international organizations and official representatives of foreign countries		0	1	0	0	1
Total of the groups 6-7			0	2	0	0	2

Airtime, number of mentionings/citations, references and attitudes of group representatives to the amendments to the RA Constitution in TV programs

“Shant”

Total amount of TV pieces studied			161				
Amount of TV pieces devoted to the topic of the monitoring			13				
Groups			Airtime allocated to statements of representatives of the group regarding the amendments to the RA Constitution (sec.)	Number of mentionings/citations of statements/positions on the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)	Attitude of the representatives of the group to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)		
					+	-	0
1.	Factions/parties represented in the National Assembly of Armenia	“Republican” (RPA)	150	9	2	0	7
		“Prosperous Armenia”	29	4	2	0	2
		“Armenian National Congress”	86	11	0	2	9
		“Orinats Yerkir”	35	6	0	1	5
		“Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutyun”	65	7	2	0	5
		“Heritage”	19	4	0	2	2
Total of group 1			384	41	6	5	30
2.	Independent members of National Assembly of Armenia and non-parliamentary parties		0	3	0	1	2
3.	Civil society, expert community, non-formal civic activists		203	4	1	2	1
4.	Representatives of initiatives formed in connection with the amendments to the RA Constitution	Civic initiative “No pasaran!”	0	1	0	1	0
		Front of Public Salvation “New Armenia”	19	3	0	3	0
5.	Vox Populi		0	0	0	0	0
Total of the groups 2-5			222	11	1	7	3
			Airtime allocated for expression of opinion regarding the amendments to the RA Constitution (sec.)	Number of references to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)	Nature of references to the amendments to the RA Constitution (units)		
					+	-	0
6.	Media and journalists		0	0	0	0	0
7.	Government-level international organizations and official representatives of foreign countries		0	0	0	0	0
Total of the groups 6-7			0	0	0	0	0