



## MEDIA ETHICS OBSERVATORY OF ARMENIA

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### JUDGMENT OF MEDIA ETHICS OBSERVATORY

Regarding the complaint of the Commission on Television and Radio about 1in.am news website's coverage during the pre-election campaign for Gyumri Council of Elders elections

#### A. FACTS

1. On March 31, 2025, Media Ethics Observatory received a complaint from the Commission on Television and Radio (CTR), in which the complainant stated that it had reviewed the election-related [pieces](#) published on "1in.am" website during the pre-election period of the March 30, 2025 snap elections for Gyumri Council of Elders, between March 15 and 23, and concluded that the media supported a specific candidate and political party running in the elections. In particular, according to the complainant, almost all of the videos contained a pre-election campaign video of Levon Barseghyan, the candidate for Gyumri mayor from "Evradashinq" (EuroAlliance) party alliance. In addition, the CTR noted that the guests in the monitored programs were either representatives of "Evradashinq", or expressed praise or support for it. The complainant also highlighted that "SKIZB MEDIA KENTRON" Ltd. (the company managing "[1in.am](#)") failed to publish information about the allocation of paid airtime, as mandated by the constitutional law titled "Electoral Code of the Republic of Armenia." Instead, the company stated verbally that the airtime was provided free of charge. The CTR requested that MEO present its position regarding the issue.
2. Given that "1in.am" is a member of the Armenian Media Self-Regulation Initiative (SRI), under paragraph 4.6 of its Regulations, MEO undertook a review of this complaint and sought clarification from the media on the issue. In particular, on April 10, 2025, MEO Coordinator sent an inquiry to the media, requesting the following information:
  - a) did any political forces other than "Evradashinq" that were running in the Gyumri elections, submit requests to "1in.am" editorial office to air their campaign videos?
  - b) did "1in.am" publish any announcement about allocating paid or free airtime to the forces engaged in the campaign?
3. MEO did not receive a written response from the editorial office. However, in a direct conversation with MEO Coordinator, the director of the media informed that no other political forces had contacted them with requests to disseminate their campaign videos. He also mentioned that a [statement](#) had been published on the website as early as March 1, in

which the editorial office had expressed its readiness to host all interested political forces and provide them with equal airtime.

4. On April 9, Media Ethics Observatory reached out to the Information Disputes Council with a request for a professional opinion on the situation. Specifically, MEO asked the IDC to determine whether the broadcast of the videos in question had been carried out in compliance with the law, and whether the failure to publish information about the allocation of paid airtime for pre-election campaigning constituted a violation of the law. After reviewing the application submitted by MEO, the Information Disputes Council released its [Opinion](#).

## **B. LEGISLATIVE AND ETHICAL NORMS**

### **1. “Electoral Code” Constitutional Law of the Republic of Armenia**

**Article 20, paragraph 6.2:** Private audiovisual media service providers that allocate airtime for pre-election campaigning to candidates, parties (party alliances) running in elections, shall announce on air the price per minute of paid airtime within a maximum period of 5 days following the official announcement of the elections...

**Article 20.1, paragraph 6.3:** Campaign materials shall be published with the label “Pre-election campaigning.” In the case of campaign videos, this label shall be displayed continuously throughout the video. Any published pre-election campaign materials and videos shall contain information about the individual or entity commissioning the content.

### **2. RA Law “On Audiovisual Media”**

**Article 11, paragraph 1.4:** Audiovisual programs for pre-election campaigning provided to candidates, political parties, party alliances (or in the case of a referendum, the campaigning parties) and financed through the pre-election campaign fund (in the case of the Public Broadcaster, also the free airtime provided by law) shall continuously display the label “Pre-election (or referendum) campaigning.” For audio programs, the audience shall be reminded of the campaign no less than twice during each broadcast.

### **3. [Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists](#)**

... editors and journalists are obligated:

7.4. to give all candidates equal possibilities for presenting their platforms and views in the media, and to apply single tariffs when allocating paid space or air time in media;

7.5. not to publish materials containing hidden political advertising, and to separate materials presented for (free or paid) publication by groups supporting any party or candidate or produced at their request from other materials, or to make mention about it;

7.6. broadcast media must refrain from supporting any specific candidate or party, and the print and online media must provide clear advance announcement of their intent to do so.

## **II. [MEO Regulations](#)**

3.5. A MEO member holding personal interests or conflicts of interest regarding any issue discussed within ME - under paragraph 1.4 of the MEO Members' Code of Conduct - shall notify MEO Coordinator about it prior to the discussion and abstain from participating in that particular session.

4.6. In relation to ethical issues concerning the activities of audiovisual media service providers, the Commission on Television and Radio (according to the RA Law "On Audiovisual Media") shall be recognized as an appropriate applicant, being the state body regulating the sphere, which is also authorized to monitor the observance of professional ethics norms by these media. The applications received from the CTR shall be reviewed in accordance with the existing procedure. In cases where the dispute concerns a TV or radio company that signed the Code, MEO shall issue a judgment, whereas in other cases an expert opinion or a statement shall be provided.

5.6. Members of the self-regulation initiative, in accordance with their obligation under the Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists, shall publish the specific parts extracted from the Media Ethics Observatory judgments that relate to violations of the Code, without adding any editorial remarks. They also commit to notifying MEO by providing a link to the particular publication.

### **C. MEO JUDGMENT**

#### **Media Ethics Observatory,**

- having reviewed the complaint filed by the Commission on Television and Radio regarding the coverage provided by "1in.am" news website during the pre-election campaign for Gyumri Council of Elders elections,
- having examined the factual circumstances presented in the complaint along with the verbal clarification provided by the "1in.am" management,

#### **concludes that:**

- ✓ an examination of a considerable portion of pieces on Gyumri Council of Elders elections published on "1in.am" from March 15 to March 23, 2025, clearly demonstrates that during the pre-election campaign, the media supported "Evradashinq" party alliance and its mayoral candidate Levon Barseghyan. Accordingly, by supporting a specific candidate and party alliance running in the elections without declaring this endorsement, "1in.am" also violated the requirement of paragraph 7.6. of the Code.
- ✓ In addition, the media violated the provision outlined in paragraph 7.5 of the Code (... to separate materials presented for (free or paid) publication by groups supporting any party or candidate or produced at their request from other materials, or to make mention about it).
- ✓ As for the complainant's reference to a possible violation of Armenian legislation by the media due to its failure to disclose information on the allocation of paid airtime, MEO turned to the Information Disputes Council on the matter. The IDC issued an [Opinion](#), according to which, during the pre-election period of the March 30, 2025 snap elections for Gyumri Council of Elders, between March 15 and 23, campaign materials on *Skizb Media Kentron Ltd.'s 1in TV* were

disseminated in violation of paragraphs 1 and 6 of Article 20, paragraph 3 of Article 20.1 of the Electoral Code, and paragraph 4 of Article 11 (1) of the RA Law “On Audiovisual Media.”

- ✓ In particular, the IDC opinion states that *Skizb Media Kentron Ltd.*’s argument that a [statement](#) was disseminated via *1in TV* on March 1 regarding its decision not to allocate paid airtime to the forces running in the elections, accompanied by readiness to host all interested candidates and provide them with coverage is not well-founded. First, the deadline was breached: the information regarding the platform usage during the campaign should have been made public no later than February 25, as stipulated by law. Added to that, the statement failed to specify whether all candidates had the opportunity to publish their campaign videos free of charge, as was the case for one of them. The IDC also concluded that when airing the video piece in question the media was obligated - pursuant to paragraph 4 of Article 11 (1.4) of the RA Law “On Audiovisual Media” - to ensure the continuous display of the label “Pre-election campaigning”—an obligation that was not met.

*MEO recalls the provision of its Regulations, requiring members of the Self-Regulation Initiative - such as 1in.am in this case - to publish the specific parts extracted from the Media Ethics Observatory judgments that relate to violations of the Code, without adding any editorial remarks and notify MEO by providing a link to the particular publication.*

*Note: Since the complaint concerns Levon Barseghyan, a candidate in Gyumri Council of Elders elections who is also a member of Media Ethics Observatory, he did not participate in the review and decision-making process related to this case, in line with the MEO Regulations.*

**Adopted on May 30, 2025  
by the following MEO composition:**

**Gnel NALBANDYAN**, Chief Editor of “Newmag” Publishing House

**Boris NAVASARDIAN**, Honorary President of Yerevan Press Club

**Davit ALAVERDYAN**, Chief Editor of “Mediamax” news agency

**Vigen SARGSYAN**, Chairman of the Commission on Professional Ethics of  
Yerevan Press Club

**Nouneh SARKISSIAN**, Managing Director of Media Initiatives Center

**Ashot MELIKYAN**, Chairman of Committee to Protect Freedom of  
Expression

**Narineh AVETISYAN**, Executive Director of Vanadzor “Lori” TV Company

**Anzhela STEPANYAN**, Editor of Armavir “Alt” TV Company

*[Media Ethics Observatory](#) was established by the media, joining the self-regulation initiative, which make 91 as of today. In its judgments MEO is guided by the Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists, adopted on March 10, 2007 and revised at the May 18, 2024 general meeting of the media that joined the self-regulation initiative.*