RUSSIAN CHANNELS CONTINUE TO MANIPULATE PUBLIC OPINION

Bratislava, 13 April 2017 – Monitoring shows that Russian channels continue to manipulate public opinion

The news programs of *First Channel*, *Russia 1* and *NTV* offered very similar editorial content, both in terms of selection of political actors presented as well as the tone of their coverage. This suggests a lack of editorial independence and editorial policy being externally coordinated, according to a report published by MEMO 98.

Once again, the three main TV channels concentrated their coverage on the authorities - president and government. Following the recent US elections, a newly elected US president was also prominently featured in their news programs. While Russian president and government were consistently portrayed in a neutral or positive way, with practically no negative coverage, the foreign subjects were portrayed in a very negative way. The coverage of President Trump was an exception from this trend as he was portrayed in a neutral and sometimes even in a positive way.

RBK offered slightly different picture when it comes to its coverage of political actors – it was less propagandistic when compared to the state-controlled TV channels. *Dozhd* also provided a significant portion of its coverage to the authorities. However, by contrast to the state-controlled TV channels and NTV, its coverage was more diverse and included also critical views on the performance of the authorities.

Russia Today focused primarily on institutions and affairs outside of Russia, presenting them overall in an extremely negative light. This editorial approach does not apply to the coverage of Russian authorities which are portrayed positively. Ukraine and fights in Donetsk and Luhansk featured again prominently on almost all TV channels, while the Syrian conflict was given much less coverage in comparison with the previous monitoring period (September and October 2016) - except on *Russia Today* where it continued to feature prominently.

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