

COUNTRY REPORT BULGARIA



The Council for Electronic Media

Independent media regulator of
Bulgaria

25th Anniversary



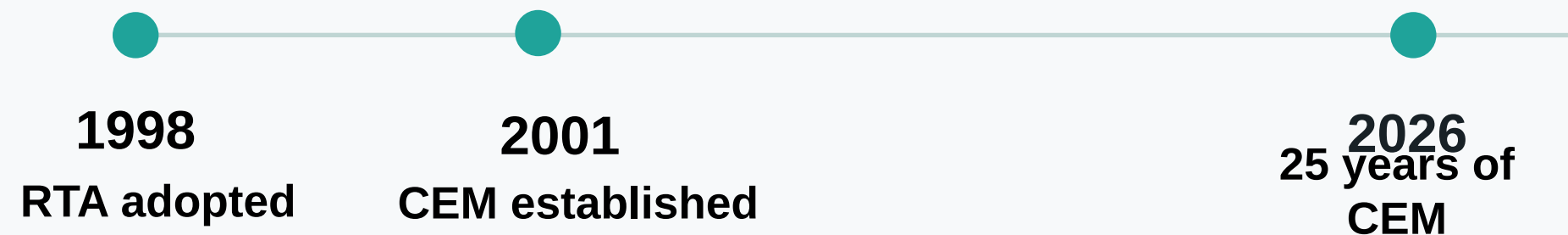
The Council for Electronic Media (CEM) is the independent regulatory authority in Bulgaria that regulates media services in accordance with the Bulgarian Radio and Television Act (RTA).

Linear media services

Non-linear media services

Video-sharing platforms

Key milestones



In November 2026, the Council will mark 25 years since its establishment as the successor to the National Radio and Television Council.

Chairperson: Gabriela Naplatanova, PhD, elected on 23 April 2026

Public interest principles

- Freedom of speech & media independence
- Pluralism & cultural diversity
- Consumer protection & accessibility
- Non-discrimination & fair competition
- The proper functioning of the internal market and the promotion

Media environment in Bulgaria

Providers and services under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Bulgaria as of 10 September 2026

53 licensed radio service providers

broadcast 78 radio programmes
via terrestrial analogue broadcasting networks

16 registered radio service providers

broadcast/transmit 16 radio programmes
for distribution via cable networks

**8 licensed audiovisual media
service providers**

broadcast 12 television channels
via terrestrial digital broadcasting
networks

**92 registered audiovisual media
service providers**

transmit by cable **128 television
channels** for distribution via cable
networks and satellite in Bulgaria

**2 registered audiovisual media
service providers**

transmit by satellite **13 television
channels** for distribution outside
Bulgaria

65 providers

81 non-linear media services

2 providers

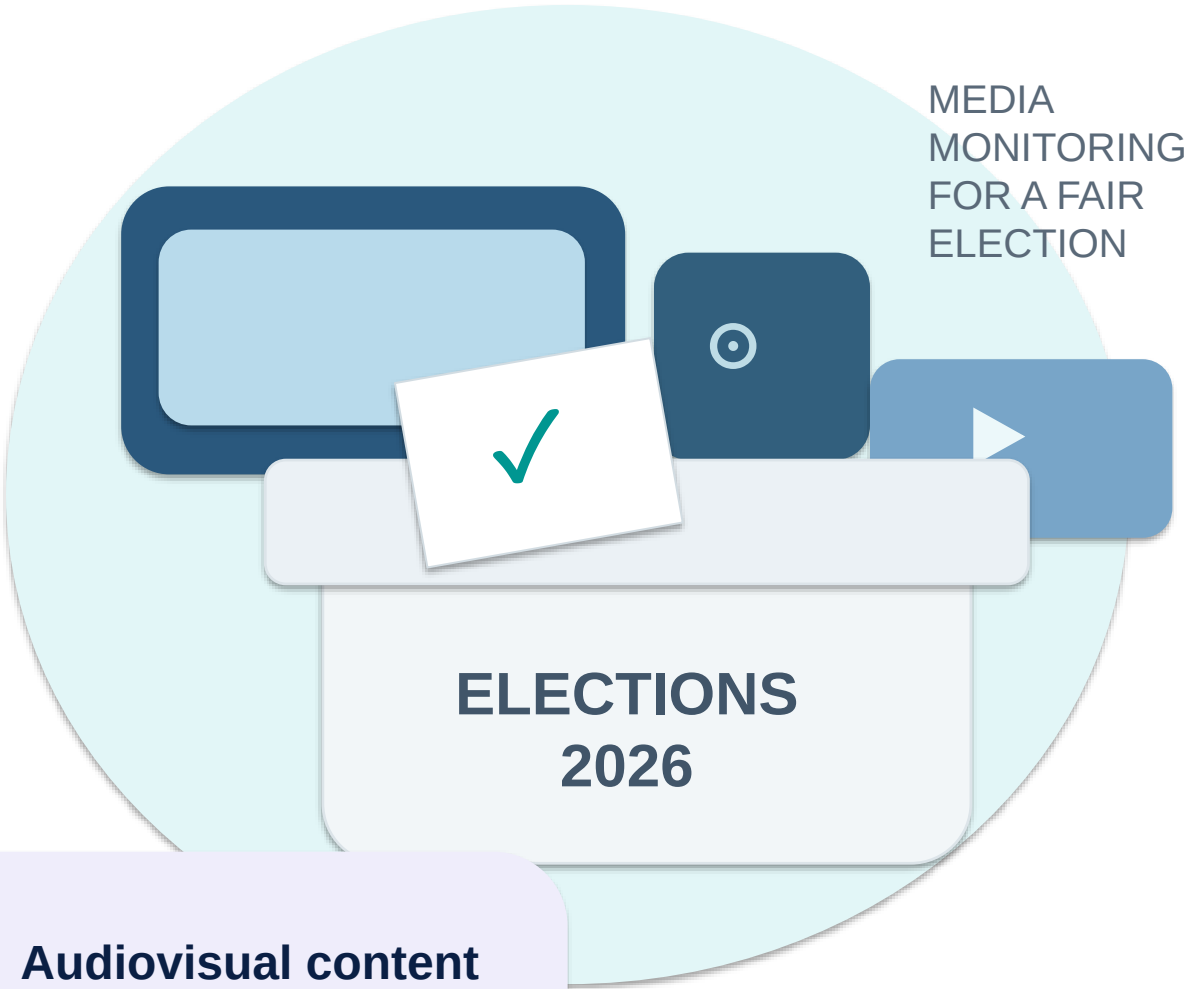
2 video-sharing platforms

Supervision 1: Election Campaign Monitoring | March - April 2026



Context

- For the eighth consecutive time since 2020, CEM conducted specialized monitoring of the pre-election campaign for the parliamentary elections held on 19 April 2026.
- Under Article 32(1)(22) of the Radio and Television Act, the report and results are submitted to the Central Election Commission. The monitoring scope is determined in advance by an agreement between CEM and the Central Election Commission.



Monitoring scope

13

Linear services of the public service broadcasters

Bulgarian National Television and Bulgarian National Radio

15

Linear services of commercial media providers

13 television channels and 2 radio programmes

14

Audiovisual content in non-linear services and the video-sharing platform VBOX7



Sociological survey

Traditionally, the Council organized, financed, and presented the results of a sociological survey on the pre-election campaign: “Audience attitudes during the pre-election campaign for the election of people’s representatives”, conducted by the sociological agency Measure.

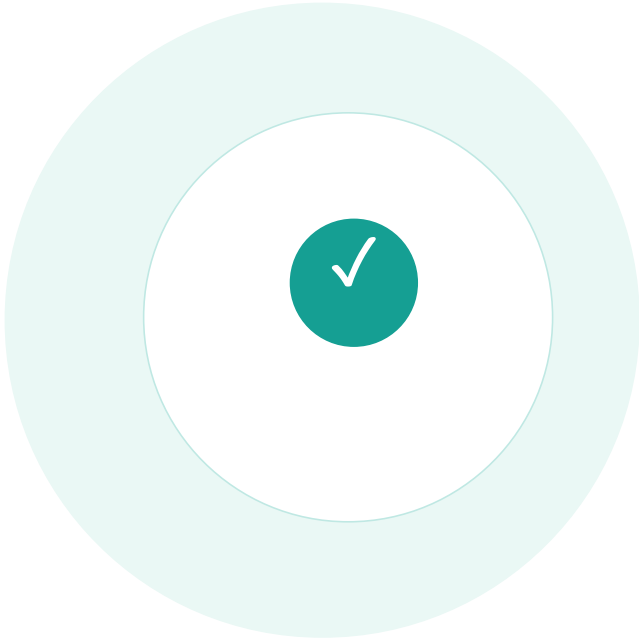
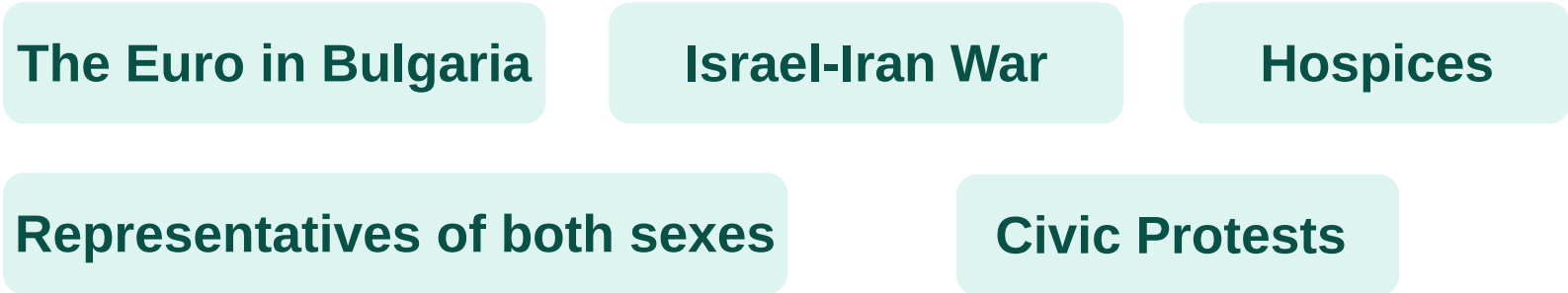
Supervision 2: Thematic and Targeted Monitoring



Quantitative highlights



Topics of monitoring



Conferences and initiatives - 1

25

NOVEMBER
2025

CEM conference

European Media Freedom Act

A framework for independence and pluralism in the European Union

On 25 November 2025, CEM organized a conference bringing together journalists and experts. The forum presented the main provisions of EMFA and the need for amendments to national legislation.

Discussed topics

1

Media freedom

Protection of journalists and safeguards for freedom of expression

2

Editorial independence

Quality journalism and clear professional standards

3

Ownership transparency

Optimisation of media registers and ownership data

4

Public service media

Financing, independence and transparent distribution of state advertising

5

European media services

Activities and functions of European media services bodies

6

Audience rights

Citizens' rights and stronger public-interest safeguards

Conferences and initiatives - 2

22
JULY
2026

Professional discussion

Editorial independence and professional standards

On 22 July 2026, CEM organized a discussion dedicated to editorial independence and the need to establish clear professional standards in the media.

Representatives of the professional community, academia, and journalistic organizations discussed standards for editorial independence and mechanisms for protecting it from external influence.

Participants agreed that editorial independence is inseparable from editorial responsibility and requires clear, written, publicly available standards that are applied consistently and updated regularly.

Key takeaways

1 Transparency

Editorial statutes can serve as a practical tool for transparent editorial decision-making and for distinguishing journalistic work from personal positions.

2 Responsibility

Participants emphasized that editorial independence must go hand in hand with editorial responsibility and accountability to the public.

3 Professional standards

The media need clear, written and publicly available professional standards that are applied consistently and periodically updated.

Round table

CEM organized a round table on “Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities and Challenges for the Media and Regulation.”

Influencer training

CEM participated in the first-of-its-kind training for influencers on “Regulation and Ethical Rules of Influencer Marketing” held jointly with the National Self-Regulation Council.

Conferences and initiatives - 3

SEP 2025
to
SEP 2026

Accessibility initiative

Accessibility of media programmes and services

Between September 2025 and September 2026, four expert working-group meetings were held with representatives of the technology sector, media service providers, Bulgarian National Radio (BNR), Bulgarian National Television (BNT) and representatives of the deaf and blind communities.

The discussions focused on improving accessibility and developing practical solutions for subtitling services for people with disabilities.

Key developments

ABRO proposal

ABRO proposed a campaign in September 2026 to promote the “subtitles on demand” service for the deaf community.

Use of AI tools

Media service providers supported broader use of AI tools for subtitling while acknowledging the risk of errors in Bulgarian-language transcription.

Service model

“Subtitles on demand” are prepared using subtitles generated by artificial intelligence.

Next steps

CEM and the participants agreed to sign a Cooperation Agreement in September and to launch the provision of subtitles simultaneously across the networks of major operators. The initiative is expected to support the development of a more accessible media environment for people with disabilities.

bTV Media Group and Nova Broadcasting Group already provide subtitles on demand on their platforms; the service remains in an experimental phase.

Conferences and initiatives - 4

26

AUGUST
2026

DSA coordination

Instruction for the implementation of the Digital Services Act

The Communications Regulation Commission, the Council for Electronic Media and the Commission for Personal Data Protection drew up a draft Instruction on the coordination of activities under Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 — the Digital Services Act (DSA).

On 26 August 2026, the three institutions signed the Instruction as a practical framework for interaction, coordination and information exchange in implementing the DSA.

Participating institutions

CRC Communications Regulation Commission

CEM Council for Electronic Media

CPDP Commission for Personal Data Protection

The Instruction defines

Forms of interaction

Coordination mechanisms and exchange of information between the competent authorities in relation to the supervision of intermediary-service providers.

Institutional coordination

Coordination between the CRC, CEM and CPDP in performing their functions as competent authorities under Article 49 of the DSA.

Joint actions

Rules for supervision, information exchange, coordinated inspections, joint actions, cooperation and reporting at national and European level.

Audience research and monitoring

First **Nationally representative sociological study**
CEM initiated a study of BNT and BNR audiences and their expectations regarding the broadcasters' public mission.

2 Large-scale monitoring exercises
Pluralism of viewpoints was monitored in news and current-affairs programmes on BNT and BNR.

Bulgarian National Television

15 July 2025 CEM launched a competition procedure for a new Director General, following a long legal dispute.

20 February 2026 Despite appeals and divergent court decisions, the Council finalized the competition procedure for the election of a new BNT Director General.

23 February 2026 New members of the BNT Management Board were approved, as proposed by the new Director General.

12 June 2026 CEM approved the management programme of BNT Director General Milena Milotinova.

Strategic priorities

The management programme builds on the Director General election concept and includes new priorities arising after the appointment. A major priority is the organization of the Eurovision Song Contest in Bulgaria – a significant challenge for BNT, coordinated with the European Broadcasting Union, state institutions and the Municipality of Burgas.

Other priorities: programming, technological and digital development and innovative ways to communicate with audiences while fulfilling the public mission and reaching more viewers.

International and regulatory activities

The Council actively participates in:

- A working group at the Ministry of Culture - discusses amendments to the Radio and Television Act arising from the **European Media Freedom Act**.
- Working groups of the European Board for Media Services (EBMS), the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA) and the Black Sea Regulators Forum (BRAAF).

MEDIA BOARD
European Board for Media Services



epra
European Platform
of Regulatory Authorities



25 years **CEM**
COUNCIL FOR ELECTRONIC MEDIA

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

www.cem.bg

+359 2 970 88 12

office@cem.bg