

Number: 1141/2025/I

Date:

Belgrade 25

Report of the Programme Monitoring and Analysis Service of the REM

<p>Ex officio procedure</p>	<p>Against: Public Media Institution Radio Television of Serbia, Belgrade – RTS</p> <p>Summary: The Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media was sent a complaint by the Chairman of the Management Board of RTS over a report in the TV programme <i>Važne stvari</i> (Important Things) broadcast on the RTS 1 channel on 27 September 2025.</p> <p>The complaint highlighted the need to examine facts and circumstances in order to determine a potential violation of Article 24 of the Rulebook on the Protection of the Rights of Minors in the Area of Media Service Provision, as well as Article 66 of the Law on Electronic Media, and initiate an examination procedure.</p> <p>The complaint in question will be taken into consideration as a notification, while the entire procedure will be conducted <i>ex officio</i>.</p>
<p>Report</p>	<p>The REM Monitoring and Analysis Service reviewed the broadcast content, the <i>Važne stvari</i> (Important Things) programme, which was aired on 27 September 2025, in the time slot from 12:00:06 to 12:14:44. It is a children's programme, the first in the new broadcasting season. In the announcement of the content, it was pointed out that <i>the children's programme editorial team continues to concern itself with the interests of children, their joys, sorrows, goals and fears through the Važne stvari (Important Things) documentary series. As in the previous year, the little ones have an opportunity to have their hairdresser Borko make them the hairstyles they want and to reveal what is important to them in spontaneous conversation with him. This year as well, we will be looking into the world of children. It is sincere, but its colours are not only those of bright tones: in it, there are births of brothers and sisters, starting school and all the emotions that it brings, the joy of a horse breaking into a gallop, but also the sadness due to death, divorce,</i></p>

friends left behind and moving away. We will find out what it is like to live with a brother who has autism, what life in the countryside looks like, what it is like to visit Europe on bicycles with one's family, what it is like to love everything that is colourful and shiny... Sitting on a hairdresser's chair, children open up their hearts and talk about what is important to them.

It was also noted that the series of programmes was done under a Dutch license. The broadcast programme featured four children, two boys and two girls, pupils in lower grades of elementary schools. They talked about several topics: the atmosphere in school, about animals, about what they would like to be when they grow up, about daily activities, about socialising, family relationships, etc. These were usually short answers to questions from the hairdresser who was cutting their hair while they were talking; spontaneous answers on various topics, and the host (hairdresser) guided the whole conversation with the aim of getting children to "open up" in front of the cameras. Editing was done to alternate between answers, thus skilfully ensuring a dynamic programme and transition from lighter, introductory topics to more serious ones. The contentious segment was aired in the time slot from 12:01:54 to 12:02:13 (nineteen seconds):

Boy: *I think, the first semester we went to school completely normally, but now we have had these interruptions because of these blockades and protests.*

Host (hairdresser): *and what kind of blockades and protests are they?*

Boy: *well, students are fighting for justice. And for our future.*

The boy later also talked about relationships within his own family, noting that his parents' fighting was having a negative effect on him.

Conclusion

The concept of the *Važne stvari* (*Important Things*) programme is based on sincere, direct and interesting testimonies of children about the reality around them, their own perceptions of relationships among friends, in the family, dreams, love for animals, but also on more difficult topics such as the relationship between parents, or attitude toward children with special needs. More serious topics also include school events such as the interruption of teaching, the cause of those interruptions, and in general the reality surrounding and affecting children. Therefore, a statement about the reasons for the interruption of teaching seen through the eyes of a boy cannot be an abuse of the child's participation for political purposes, nor an abuse of his statement. The host did not ask leading questions in the context of misuse, but only in terms of clarifying the interruption of teaching.

Considered as abuse of children for political purposes is their participation in

activities that are not for the benefit of children, but in the interest of an individual or a party. A child may not be placed in a situation where its ignorance or lack of awareness, credulity or excessive openness is exploited (*Kodeks o zaštiti dece od političkih zloupotreba - Code on Protection of Children from Political Abuse*, author Prvoslav S. Plavšić, publisher: Prijatelji dece Srbije - Friends of the Children of Serbia).

In the example above, the child was not uninformed; based on his or her own information obtained in school, in his or her family, through social media or other channels, the child stated how he or she saw reality and the world. Any other interpretation would be contrary to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and to free expression: ... *States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.* (Article 12 of the Convention). *The media shall encourage and be open to children's participation in their pages and programmes, and their free expression, and not only to their education, information and entertainment. ... The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.* (Article 13 of the Convention).

The child's appearance was informative, voluntary and transparent, with due regard for his or her views, and in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia that lays down that *a child shall enjoy human rights suitable to their age and mental maturity.*

As a rule, when making the determination whether children and their participation in the programme were abused in any way, despite the permission of the parents, the Regulator takes into account the fact whether a right of the child, his or her dignity or interest was violated by those appearances. In particular, this dilemma is present when broadcasting humanitarian appeals or programmes in which children and entire families are helped to obtain improved living conditions. In such situations, the participation of children and minors is considered justified, because their interest (to get a new home, for example), far exceeds the duty of media service providers to protect the identity of children participants in the programme.

In the *Važne stvari* (*Important Things*) programme, there was no abuse of a minor for political purposes, and the nature of programme content and the manner of their participation was adapted to their age, maturity and reason for participation (Article 66, Paragraph 4 of the Law on Electronic Media).

Based on all of the above, I believe that there is no reason to initiate an examination procedure against the ***Public Media Institution Radio Television of Serbia, RTS.***

REM Monitoring and Analysis Service