

Potential Incidences of Clientelism Should Be Prevented

Skopje, 17 December 2018 – As the competent regulatory authority, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services conducts regular inspections into the observance of the legal provisions concerning the ownership structure and concentration of the media outlets .

During the latest check of this kind, conducted on 14 December 2018, a situation was detected that may lead to an occurrence of clientelistic attitude of a media outlet towards the government. Namely, the physical entity Viktor Serafimov, owner of the regional “Television 3”, was found to also appear as the owner of “Skopje Auto Examination Centre” which, according to writings, *“landed a millions-worth business deal with the Interior Ministry only 7 days after its foundation, for conducting driver exams on the territory of Skopje”*.

The parallel ownership of the broadcaster and the above-mentioned physical entity, in itself, is not in collision with the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services; however, it creates an opportunity for the government to influence the editorial policy of the television station and, thus, affect its editorial independence.

The regulator has no mechanisms at its disposal to prevent such phenomena, nor does it have competences over legal entities that have no relation to the audiovisual sphere. Many a time so far, the Agency has organized workshops on the professional journalistic standards and it strives towards reinforcing the self-regulation and, consequently, journalists’ integrity. Nevertheless, freedom and independence of the media are conditioned by a number of factors. This

means that the government and the state institutions should create a favourable environment for the media, i.e. manifest integrity and turn into practice their efforts for media reforms with the ultimate aim of having free, independent and democratic media.