

LAWSUIT THREATS POSE DIRECT PRESSURE ON THE MEDIA

Skopje, 2 July 2019 – Following the statement by the Government's Secretary General, made at today's press conference, that he would initiate lawsuits against certain journalists and media outlets, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services wishes to point out that such acts constitute direct pressure on the media work .

As stated in the Council of Europe's Declaration on Freedom of Political Debate in the Media, *"Public officials must accept that they will be subject to public scrutiny and criticism, particularly through the media, over the way in which they have carried out or carry out their functions, insofar as this is necessary for ensuring transparency and the responsible exercise of their functions."*

Anyone – including persons who hold public offices – who considers that a media outlet has done harm to their reputation, honour or interests by having published untrue, incorrect or false news about them, or announced an incomplete information, have the right to seek from the media outlet to publish a correction or a reply to the information announced.

The Agency keeps appealing, first of all, to use the right to correction or reply, instead of directly resort to lawsuits against journalists and media outlets, particularly when it comes to person holding public offices.

The lawsuit threats, used instead of the right to correction or reply, jeopardize the freedom of information and the freedom of the media in general. Never should it be forgotten that the media's role is to be critical against and correctors of the government, and that they should be encouraged to perform their duty towards the public thoroughly and

professionally.