

Manual
On Reporting about Local Issues and
Investigative Reporting

For Local Media

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by German Filkov and Sabina Fakic.

The authors views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

Content

Introduction

Increased role of local media

How should local media respond to their increased role

Key topics of local importance

Municipal budget

Local Economic Development.....

Public Sector

Health

Education

Urbanism

Research and information about corruption

Where and what can be researched, where to look for corruption, how it unfolds,
and how it can be evented?.....

Investigative journalism...

What is investigative journalism?

Journalists' problems

Phases in the research process

Identification of the research topic

Setting the research assumption.....

Development of research strategy and plan

Searching for and collecting documents

Searching for people and sources.....	
Searching the Internet	
Direct observation in the field	
Setting the research timeframe	
Assessment of funds needed for the research	
Organization of the story and assessment of the situation	
Final checking of the story	
Writing and publishing the story	

Legal and ethical aspects	
Freedom of public information	
Free access to public information	
Protection of privacy and personal data	
Libel and offence	
Ethics issues.....	
Code of journalists of Macedonia.....	

Introduction

That a free press is a cornerstone of democracy has been recognized by an ever growing number of nations for more than 200 years. When framing the constitution of the newly independent Republic of Macedonia in (insert) the authors address these and other basic freedoms. The framers included in Section II the Basic *Freedom and Rights of the Individual and Citizen* that includes series of articles enumerating these freedoms. At Section II, Article 16, the Constitution addresses the freedom of public expression of thought, freedom of speech and the prohibition of censorship:

*“The freedom **of personal conviction, conscience, thought and public expression of thought is guaranteed.***

*The **freedom of speech**, public address, public information and the establishment of institutions for public information **is guaranteed.***

Free access to information and the freedom of reception and transmission of information are guaranteed.

The right of reply via the mass media is guaranteed.

The right to a correction in the mass media is guaranteed.

The right to protect a source of information in the mass media is guaranteed.

Censorship is prohibited.”

Similarly, in America, more than 200 years ago the first amendment to the US Constitution and the first article of the “Bill of Rights” states:

*“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the **freedom of speech, or of the press**; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”*

However, the mere insertion of such language in constitutions whether in Macedonia or America or any other country, while extremely important as a foundation guarantee, does not by itself actively implement or realize the benefits of these critically important

freedoms. In order to reach the full potential positive impact on a society, freedom of speech and a free media need “champions” who take these freedom to heart and work endlessly to achieve the many societal benefits.

In America, it was the thought and actions of Thomas Jefferson, author of the “*Declaration of Independence*” and third president of the United States who became known as one of the great champions and defenders of freedom of the press, freedom of speech and a defender of the rights of citizens to be well informed about the workings of their government.

As Macedonia continues the challenging process of building a free and independent nation, freedom of the press and the right, indeed obligation, of citizens to be well informed about their government is a critical matter. Both citizens and journalists have key responsibilities in this nation building process. With the emergence of the process to decentralize certain governmental authorities to municipalities, these challenges and responsibilities take on important new dimensions at the local level throughout the country.

The problems for Macedonia are new but the principles are several centuries old and are now well established in the practice of both responsible journalism and responsible citizenship. It is well that those who have key roles and responsibilities in this process in Macedonia, take a few moments to read and reflect on the thoughts and opinions of that great champion of freedom of the press and of a well informed citizenry as they approach their tasks. Below are but a few of the relevant thoughts of Thomas Jefferson written at a time when he and his fellow citizens were facing some of the same critical challenges faced in Macedonia today:

“I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform

their discretion.”

“Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.”

“Whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government.”

“Where the press is free and every person able to read, all is safe.”

“Educate and inform the whole mass of the people... They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty.”

The manual that follows is designed to help journalists in Macedonia help meet these new challenges successfully. It is also to help assure that as decentralization progresses, citizens may be well informed in exercising their rights and responsibilities at the community level all across the country.

Duane Beard

Director

USAID Macedonia Local Government Activity

1. Increased role of the local media

With the decentralization process – the local media, in the real sense of the word, gained the key role in strengthening the transparency and accountability of the local authorities. Now, in line with the shared competencies between the central and local government, the citizens' quality of life largely depends on the quality of policies and the efficiency of their implementation both on the central and local levels.

The process of transferring part of the competencies from the central to the local level also decentralized the responsibility of the national media to the local media to serve as controllers of the institutions' quality of work within the municipalities. Therefore, the local media should work more intensively on providing a free flow of information as a way of contributing seriously to the good governance of their municipalities.

In circumstances when the local government has competencies in all spheres, which determine the peoples' life quality in the municipality, such as communal services, health, education, and economic development, it is crucial to stress the importance of keeping the citizens in these areas informed in a timely manner. Only if informed can citizens make the right choices and pressure the government to live up to its promises and work efficiently and responsibly in the interest of all citizens in the municipality.

Local media should voice all important issues for the community, thus enabling the impact over the authorities' decision-making for maximizing the citizens' needs and interests, vis-à-vis the political and personal interest of the local government representatives. If the media do not respond to this trend, there is a serious risk that citizens would be excluded from active participation in the municipal development based on their needs and the danger that – the irresponsible local governance is attributed to

the objective and not subjective factors which block the development and progress of the local environments. WHAT????

1.1. How should local media respond to the increased role?

If the quality of life in one municipality depends increasingly on the work of the local institutions, and if the media are to respond on their increased role in this respect, the key question is how this should be done. The answer to this seemingly complex question is very simple: everywhere, and for each question, one should look for what is in the best interest of the citizens concerned.

In order to respond to their increased role, the local media should build their future development on two pillars:

1. Following the citizens' interest in the municipality and
2. Localization of national themes.

Following the interest of the citizens in the municipality implies that the information issued by the media should offer answers to questions, topics, and problems that are in the interest of the citizens. The media should always offer answers to the following questions:

- What would this mean for the citizens?
- Would it have positive or negative impact on the citizens?
- What is/are the citizens' opinion(s) on this particular topic or issue?

Considering that the quality of life in one local environment depends on the central government policy, the local media should, in the long run, focus on strengthening the pillar for localization of the national topics. This implies that local media should inform citizens about the central government policy and decision-making through direct presentation on how the decisions influences them, the business community, political events, and the institutions in the local context.

Practically, this implies that the Parliament of Republic of Macedonia decision for adoption of the Law on stimulating the employment should have a prominent place in the local media information, although the decision is reached by the central government. <== What?? In addition, in order to respond to the needs of the local community, the law should be presented through discussion with the local business community representatives who can then assess for themselves (as well as through conversation with the unemployed people about their expectations) whether it will be possible to use the envisaged benefits. This approach for the national topics localization should also be applied for other important central government decisions and policies (with the exception of the legislation).

The difference in the approach of the national and local media should be seen only in the sources. Namely, each environment has its own business nucleus, political circles, and experts' public, civic sector. <==What?? Indeed, it is the representatives of the local government who are familiar with the specifics of their environment and who can realistically evaluate or assess how policies created on the central level affect the local community. Increasing the outreach of information in the local community about the central government's policies' impact on the municipal quality of life and development would also raise the citizens' awareness about important social issues and would therefore increase their ability to reach the right decisions and positively influence the efficiency of the central government.

Through building such a civil approach towards information outreach and offering comprehensive information about both local and national policies, the local media actually invest in their future. Namely, the more open they are with the citizens, the higher their ratings will be. According to the principle of connected vessels, the bigger the media's perception of the citizens' problems is, the bigger their trust will be in the media, and that motivates the citizens for more active participation in municipal events.

1.2. Key topics of local importance

In order to be able to respond to the challenge of informing the citizens about topics which are relevant to them and on which the quality of life in the local communities depends, the local media must focus on the following areas:

- Municipal budget
- Local economic development
- Public sector
- Health
- Education
- Urbanism

The selection of the topics is made so that not only the spheres of great importance for the citizens are covered, but also the spheres where the local government has increased competencies. In addition, these are spheres where the work and achievements largely depend on the efficiency of the local government. Therefore, it is indispensable that the local media direct their attention towards these spheres and initiate journalistic research about events in these spheres.

1.2.1. Municipal budget

The budget is one of the most important issues in a municipality about which the media should inform citizens. It reflects the decision-making of the local authorities in all spheres of its competencies, including education, health, taxes, and fees, and, hence, it has an important impact on the life of the citizens. It is up to the media to raise the interest of the citizens about this important issue.

The fiscal year in Republic of Macedonia lasts from January 1 until December 31, thus, the annual national and municipal budgets are valid within this period. The budget preparation and adoption processes can last for several months and include several key steps: Firstly, each municipal department and budget-financed local institution states its needs for the following year. Then, the requested funds are reconciled with the possibilities of the municipality, i.e. with the planned revenues from the budget. Once the needs and revenues are reconciled, a draft budget is developed, which is eventually submitted for adoption to the Council of the municipality, which, in turn, has the right to intervene in its content. All of these adoption phases in the municipality are important and can serve as interesting news to be reported to the citizens. Such an approach to information outreach enables the media to include the citizens in the budget evaluation process and determine whether it reflects their needs and therefore opens possibilities for interventions in the items of the draft budget.

In order to provide high quality and professional information about the municipal budget adoption, the journalists must be well informed about the basics and fundamental nature of the budget. If adequate sources (either people from the municipality or experts) are not identified, journalists may not understand the budget, and may therefore not be able to explain it to their audience.

When informing about the budget, it is crucial to present its purpose, i.e. services for which money will be spent. The journalist should make self-assessments on the most

important budget items, which should be communicated to the public, because it is impossible to state and explain all the figures. ← What?

In general, the information about the budget should contain data about:

- The value of the overall municipal budget,
- The percentage of increase, i.e. decrease of the budget vis-à-vis the previous year,
- The reasons for budget increase or decrease (e.g. increased budget due to new employments in the municipality),
- Overview of the most important budget items (the items that finance the majority of the municipal budget),
- Information on how certain changes will influence the citizens' life.
- The value and description of the most important investment projects, which are financed by the budget.

When writing about the budget, the journalists should actually offer answers to such questions as those about how the budget will impact the citizens, whether the citizens will be provided with more or less services than the previous year, whether the citizens will pay more or fewer charges/fees. When reporting about the budget, journalists should also note the citizens' views about the more significant issues related to the budget, as well their views on major projects which will be financed by the municipality. Also, it is important to pay attention to the possible political differences among various opinions of the proposed budget draft, i.e. which are the inclinations of the councillors' groups.

The local media should also take into consideration that the budget is an issue requiring constant communication with the public throughout the year, and not merely on the day of its adoption by the Council of the municipality. Thus, when informing about the budget, one must consider two key questions:

- Where does the money come from (revenues)?
- Where does the money go (expenditures)?

In order to monitor the budget revenues, it is important to stress that the item-own revenues in the budget of the unit of local self-government includes property taxes, revenues from charges for particular services, revenues from the work of the enterprises founded by the municipality, fees etc. The municipalities receive a percentage of the personal income tax and the value added tax, and there is an envisaged system of grants, i.e. additional budget transfers for the provision of additional funds for municipal financing.

Therefore, it is important to observe the planned and collected revenues of the municipality in order to assess the realization, then to compare the revenues in the current year with those of the previous year in order to assess the collection trend (whether positive or negative) etc. In addition, it should be considered that by monitoring the revenues collection, one can assess the economic activities of the municipality as well as the work efficiency of the public revenues office.

The most practical way to monitor the spending of the budget funds is through public procurements. Therefore, it is important for the local media to observe and inform citizens about any major public procurements in the municipality, starting with the call for bids until the realization of the procurement.

Recommendations on informing about the budget:

- Inform about the process of preparing the proposed budget draft, and not only about its adoption by the Council of the municipality;
- Learn how to read and interpret the budget;
- Increase the citizens' ability to influence budget projections;
- Make authorities explain how and what money is spent;
- Take into account that transparency is the key guarantee for rational spending of the municipal money, and that is why one should observe and inform how the budget funds are spent.

1.2.2. Local economic development

Information about the economy affects the life of every citizen. Unemployment, prices of products, investments – all of these are topics that raise the interest not only of the business community but also the interest of the citizens as workers and consumers. Information about local economic development implies reporting about all events related to civil engineering, traffic, production, agriculture, trade, and tourism i.e. everything that moves the local economy.

Journalists should regularly inform citizens about the results found by local authorities in the realization of the so-called Strategy on local economic development, thus preventing such strategies of certain municipalities from remaining as lists of ambitious projects and plans that will never be realized. It is necessary to observe what is happening in the small and medium enterprises sector and to inform the citizens about what has been done for the support of their development.

Local media should continuously impose some positive pressure over the local authorities towards solving the biggest economic problems in the municipality, such as unemployment and poverty. In order to boost economic development, it is important to initiate debates, which could assist the units of local self-government in the financing of important projects when sufficient revenues with pre-accession funds from the European Union are unavailable.

Local media should not close themselves off in their municipalities. It is necessary that they see what is happening in the other units of local self-government to learn from positive examples and to inform about projects which can be implemented in their municipality. Such comparison can serve as encouragement for the local authorities to show better results in municipal development. In addition, media coverage should be focused on the possibilities of joint projects among several municipalities. Besides the

comparison with the other more developed municipalities, local media should promote the positive examples for local economic development in the neighbouring countries.

When reporting about economic development, one should avoid deducing journalistic texts to concluding that differences between the expectations of the citizens and that local authorities' justification of the economic development mainly depend on the central government. Therefore, the list of sources should include credible economics experts in the local community who are able to correctly interpret the issues and make realistic assessments of the competencies and possibilities of the local authorities.

Recommendations for informing about local economic development:

- Inform about the ways in which local authorities cope with the most pressing economic problems;
- Seek responses from the local authorities concerning what they do in order to improve the business climate and enhance entrepreneurship;
- Find out whether and how the local economic plan is being developed, what promises are being made, and what the mayors and councillors accomplished;
- Make a research and inform what do the parliamentarians from your polling units in the interest of the citizens in your municipality and,
- Ask for more information from the regional units of the central government: how efficiently do they work, and do they respond to local needs?

1.2.3. Public sector

The public sector, in this sense, should be understood in a broader context, i.e. as the municipal administration and public enterprises and institutions that operate within the local community. The quality of the public sector work in one municipality is actually a reflection of the success of that municipality. Actually, the local self-government exists in order to provide those services to the citizens. Considering such an approach, it is implied that the media should provide its audience with all relevant information on the basis of which they can evaluate the success of the municipal enterprises and department's work.

The media should also note the attitude of the elected local government representatives towards the common?? money and joint institutions. In addition, one cannot forget that the political parties which win over the citizens' trust at elections frequently appoint the management structures in the public enterprises and institutions according to political party, family, and friendship criteria, rather than according to their professionalism and merit. It is crucial that such an approach creates a climate whereby the decision-making in these enterprises and institutions is made from political or personal interest, and not in the interest of the citizens in the municipality, who actually finance and use the services of the public enterprises and institutions.

The media should consider that such an attitude suspends the citizens' interest and reduces the quality of services provided for the citizens. The starting point for such politicisation of the public sector is identified by the legal experts in the "poor and very general" legislation, which defines the election of the management board members in the public enterprises and institutions. The Law on public enterprises (2006) includes only one article about the criteria for appointing the management board members in the public enterprises. The article reads as follows: *"in the management board, the founder shall appoint, i.e. dismiss representatives from among the affirmed and renown experts in the respective area of work in the public enterprise..."* However, even the scarce legal

framework for the election of management board members is not respected in practice. There are numerous examples of appointed members who are not only inadequate according to the qualifications and are not professional and affirmed in the enterprise's area of work, but very often do not have any point of tangency in this area.

This is precisely the role of the media: to observe political appointments, to inform the citizens about the legal obligations and practical solutions, to observe the work of the municipal public sector, and to provide arguments to the citizens through concrete figures and indicators regarding their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the work of the local self-government. The media should support the citizens by providing them with continuous and complete insight into the work of the public enterprises and institutions, considering what has been planned, what has been accomplished, and the quality of public services for the money spent.

Recommendations for reporting about local economic development:

- Inform how the local public enterprises and institutions work (how clean is the town, what is the situation with the streets, etc.);
- Look for answers about three key points: are citizens satisfied with the services from the public enterprises; what are the financial results accomplished by the public enterprises, how are the enterprises managed and who controls their operation;
- Inform about the work of the local administration. Talk to your fellow citizens – are they satisfied with the work of the administration in the respective departments. Are the criteria and conditions for obtaining permits and licenses from the respective local departments clear;
- Inform not only about the problems and administration's inefficiency, but also about good experiences because this will encourage the others as well.

1.2.4. Health

In general, the citizens are maximally interested in health topics because, after all, their life depends on the situation of the health sector in the municipality as well as on the quality of the health services that they receive. Taking this into consideration, the health institutions are increasingly under pressure for higher transparency and accountability in their work, and the media are faced with the challenge of responding to the citizens' interest for regular information about the development of events in the health sector.

Considering that people show great interest in this topic, the media can identify news in the health sector for each disruption of current events: overcrowded institutions, lack of medicines, broken down devices, patients' dissatisfaction, bad working conditions for the medical staff etc. The media should increase their journalistic scepticism whenever they are assured that there is no problem and that maximum efforts are being employed despite the patients' dissatisfaction.

When informing about public health, one must also weigh opposing interests in the sphere of wholesale of medicaments and the private health sector. Therefore, the media should carefully research what is going on in this sector. The situation related to lack of hospital capacities and medicaments proportionally to the needs, creates space whereby each emergent service is additionally charged. This is the case when different examinations, operations and surveys are made without respecting the list of appointments and hospitalisation is provided regardless of the schedules, whereby not only doctors but also other medical and administrative staff is involved. Certain doctors take advantage of the situation in the public health sector and refer their patients to private practices, where they work in their free time or in the afternoon. In this way, the entrusted position at the state account is used for personal gain and the public health institutions are used as place for recruiting patients for private practices and clinics.

Finally, whenever the media are going to release a story about the health sector related to some new investment, about expanding some new facilities or new medical equipment, the journalists should ask a range of questions in order to get the necessary information about whether the decision responds to the real needs of the health service beneficiaries or whether someone is hiding their own personal interest in the decision. Considering the ongoing reforms in the health sector, the local media must regularly monitor the reforms implementation through the prism of their impact on certain health institutions in the municipality.

Recommendations for reporting on the health sector:

- What is the situation of the health institutions? Do they have all necessary medical assets and medicaments at their disposal?
- Are the citizens satisfied with the conditions in the health institutions and with their work;
- Ask for answers about happenings from the competent institutions at the central level (Ministry of Health and Health Fund etc.).

1.2.5. Education

Considering that education is one of the pillars for the development of local community and society as a whole, the media should regularly inform about this sphere from two perspectives. The first refers to the conditions under which the educational process is conducted in the local community, and the second concerns the quality of teaching.

The condition of the primary and secondary schools from the aspect of their appearance and construction is only the visible part of the educational problems that need to be reported by the media. However, at the same time the accent should be on the provision of conditions for optimal development of each student perceived through the prism of the number of students in one class, the possibility for the teachers to pay the necessary attention to each student, teaching aids which are available for use etc.

Furthermore, the media should inform about the schools' compliance with the guaranteed equal education conditions which hold that student's will be given equal education opportunities regardless of their origin, their social and material status, their religion, or their nationality. By informing citizens of such issues, the media may enhance the role of the parents and other stakeholders in improving the quality of education. In addition, the media must perform analyses of the quality of education in each municipality through presentation of the results achieved by its students, and by comparing these with results from other years or in other municipalities.

With respect to the municipal competencies, the media should report on achievements related to the improvement of the educational system in the municipality; these include whether the respective department in the municipality makes regular analyses of the schools' operations, which measures and activities have been taken in order to promote the work of the schools, etc. With regard to the range of problems that emerged in the past period, the media should also follow the selection of companies that

provide the organized transportation in the schools, that provide food for the school, and that organize school excursions/field trips. In general, through regular reporting, thorough analyses, and investigative stories, the media will not only inform the citizens in a timely and comprehensive manner about the occurrences in this sphere, but will also enable stakeholders to positively influence the teaching and educational system, which is to produce quality staff which will contribute to the development and progress of the municipality.

Recommendations for the reporting of education:

- Inform about the quality of teaching (how many students are there per classroom, can each of them be given the attention necessary for a proper education, are there sufficient teaching aids etc.);
- Observe the conditions in which the schools operate (visit the schools with video camera/camera);
- Initiate enhanced involvement of the parents; boards in the school operation;
- If there is a university in the municipality, observe what is happening there and make efforts to use the expertise of the university staff in accelerating municipal development.

1.2.6. Urbanism

Reporting in this sector should be directed towards the initiation of enhanced citizen participation in the urban planning process and the prevention of the toleration of illegal buildings by the inspection bodies. Journalists should consider that a well-planned and implemented urban plan does not only imply the nice appearance of the municipality, but also good quality conditions for life and work in the local community.

On the contrary, the urban chaos which is created everyday in municipalities hinders its economic and cultural development and regresses its businesses and quality of life. The urban solutions should be such so as to improve the quality of living, condense and alleviate the transportation, and boost the overall development of the municipality. Therefore, much like for education and health, the citizens in each local community show great interest in the issues related to urbanism and are entitled to participate in the creation of urban plans for the community in which they live.

Recommendations for reporting on urbanism:
--

- Provide thorough information concerning the detailed urban plan, what is to be constructed and where;
- Ask for insight into the detailed plan if you plan to present research about some disputed location or construction;
- Conduct research about the work of the inspection bodies in the municipality;

Include the citizens in all debates of the municipal councils on certain urban solutions.

2. Research and reporting about corruption

According to the Law on Corruption Prevention (2004), corruption implies utilizing one's position, public authorisation, and/or official duty for the realization of any benefit for oneself or select others. The need for and importance of conducting research about

corruption and the media reporting about it arises out of the multiple and serious consequences that corruption has in all spheres of life and work. Corruption impoverishes the people, worsens the quality of public services, reduces the efficiency of the public administration and the public enterprises and institutions, disturbs the competition, dissuades national and foreign investments, hinders economic development, and regresses the democracy in the country.

A great deal of research indicates widespread corruption in all areas of life and work in Macedonia. Considering the detrimental consequences of the corruption and the great role that media have in the prevention of corruption, journalists should do more research and report on the cases of corruption. This is certainly not a simple task because this type of crime is not easy to detect and prove, mainly because of the common interest of the participants to keep silent and cover up the committed crimes.

Among others, the grounds for the journalist and media to research and report on corruption are stipulated in the Law on Corruption Prevention (2004). Article 6 reads as follows: „Exercising the authority, public authorisations, official duty and position, as well as works of public interest are all public and subject to public control. Nobody can refer to application of law or other regulation, whereby it will limit or exclude the public in order to cover up the utilization of the function, public authorizations, official duty and position for realization of any benefit, convenience, or advantage for oneself or others“.

Yet, considering that when media report about corruption, they discover things that some people or institutions want to remain secret, journalists, in Republic of Macedonia as well as in other countries in the world, face many obstacles on the way to informing about corruption in a professional and objective manner. In order to open up the space for the media and journalists to research and inform about corruption, the same Law on Corruption Prevention in article 62 reads as follows „ prohibits any force, hindering or impact in other way on the media to release or announce information on cases of corruption.<== What?? The journalist is entitled to uninterrupted access to all sources of information in accordance with the law. Nobody can exclude the public from

the debate on corruption in front of a competent body or legal entity, except for preliminary proceedings proclaimed to be confidential. Nobody can ask a journalist who released information on a corruptive act to reveal the source of their information, except in court proceedings.”

On the other hand, the law prevents violation by the media for groundless and deceptive accusation of others for corruption. Article 63 reads as follows, „ anyone who issues information about the corruptness of another person is obliged to respect the presumption of innocence and the principles of real, objective, and unbiased information, as well as other principles of the Code of professional ethics. Nobody can use the public media for false accusation of other people about corruption.

In order to be able to research corruption and inform the public about cases of corruption, first the journalists must be familiar with the areas which are most often affected by corruption. „Fixed“ tender for public procurement or asking for a bribe for a certain service are some of the most well known forms of corruption. There are many other forms and developed schemes of corruption, of which journalists must know if they want to conduct proper research and disclose them. Furthermore, journalists, with the assistance of experts in the field, should continuously indicate the manners in which the space for corruption can be reduced. Only in this way, through disclosure of corruption and indicating the possible improvements of the situation, can the media successfully play their role in anti-corruption, and thus promote and improve the standard of living and well-being of their fellow citizens, both on a national and local level. There are many and great challenges on this road, but there is nothing more important than setting up and following the basic standards of professional work in all areas of life in a democratic society. This, among others, should be the case in the journalism and the work of the local government.

2.1. Where and what to be researched, where to look for corruption, how corruption is performed, and how it can be prevented

Public procurements is one of the areas which is most subjected to corruption. Therefore, it is an area where journalists must continuously keep their eyes open. The basic functions of the municipality are actually realized through the **public procurements**, i.e. money is spent from the municipal budget through procurement of goods, services, and contracted work.

The manner and procedure for public procurements are regulated by the Law on Public Procurements (2007) and refer to the bodies of the national government, bodies of the units of local self-government, public enterprises, companies where the state or the units of local self-government have dominant capital, citizen associations and foundations with public authorisations, as well as legal entities that perform special public services. Article 12 of the Law on Public Procurements stipulates the following: „works related to the development of the public procurement system, as well as provision of rationality, efficiency, and transparency in the realization of public procurements are performed by the Bureau on public procurements, as body of the state administration within the Ministry of Finance“.

Public procurements, both on the national and local level, include large amounts of money (more than a billion euros). It is assumed that it is because of this large amount of money in public procurements that this area is so strongly subjected to corruption. Yet, considering that both parties participate in the corruptive deals, that is, both the procurers and suppliers, it is in their common interest to cover up the committed acts. According to the assessments by competent sources both in the public and private sector, corruption increases the prices for part of the public procurements by up to 30% of their real value. By awarding the public procurements to favoured bidders for personal gain, the quality of procured goods, services, and contracted works is considerably reduced; market competition is disrupted, and the procurements are not worthwhile.

Corruption in public procurements is mainly carried out in the following ways:

- Tender specification for the procurement is adjusted in favour of the favoured company-bidder by entering performances which can be met only by the respective company;
- Points criteria are „adjusted“ so that the favoured company wins by giving the highest number of points for the criteria which the company can best meet;
- The procurement is artificially divided into smaller procurements in order to avoid the obligation for public call (?) and to enable the implementation of the procedure for so-called small procurement;
- Competing with unrealistically low price only to win the procurement, and then in agreement with the procurer the prices are raised through the item „unforeseen expenses“;
- Equal distribution of the procurement to all companies competing for the tender so that own companies without quality bids are „pushed through“,
- Adjusting the three necessary bids in the cases of the so-called „small procurement“ so that the favoured company’s bid turns out to be most favourable; and,
- Poor control over the procurement implementation, which is utilized in order to avoid the completion of everything which is offered on the tender.

The main recommendation for investigating corruption cases in public procurements is to observe the procurements from beginning to end, i.e. from the initial idea and necessity for procurement until the final realization. One should not forget that corruption can exist in the decision-making process during which one decides upon what needs to be procured. (Is it something necessary and contained in the plans or is it something procured so that the favoured companies can make profit?)

When investigating public procurements, one should always insist to receive the data about the companies that won the tenders. Journalists and the public are entitled to know this information because it is a matter of citizens’ money that needs to be spent in

a rational and worthwhile manner. One should also contact both the companies that won and those that did not win the tenders in order to get the whole picture of what happened and make an objective story.

Besides the area of public procurements, corruption in the municipal administration, public enterprises, and institutions also exists in the process of services provisioned by the administration, enterprises, and institutions by receiving certain financial or material compensation for the favour. Bribe amount depends on the type of service the citizen or company requests, how important they find the service, the promptness of the requested service, and their material interest in the performed service. Although the amounts of money in separate corruption cases are generally small, this type of corruption is widespread and has entered into very small pores of society, and which, taken in total, amount to a large sum of illegally acquired money.

Key corruption generators in this area are:

- Utilization of the tardiness and inefficiency of the administration and asking for bribes to accelerate the procedures;
- Willingness by the citizens and companies to pay bribes in order to get certain services or to get them more quickly than in the regularly prescribed time;
- Complex, unclear, and non-transparent criteria, conditions, and procedures for getting the services and approvals for different licenses and decisions, whereby they send signals to the citizens and companies to offer something in return for the problem solution,
- Mutual interest by two parties to keep silent because one party (citizens and companies) received a service, and the others (officers) generated extra income.

When investigating and observing the corruptive cases in the process of service provision by the municipal administration and public enterprises and institutions, one should look for possible displeased clients who would talk openly about their case(s), investigate about the bribe amount in the surrounding area, make rank lists of institutions and departments that serve as the biggest hot spots for corruption, and hold

open discussions with the citizens of the area to talk about their opinions of the problem and how they believe the problem might be resolved.

Illegal construction is another area where corruption cases should be investigated and reported. There is a massive presence of corruption in this area. In every municipality in Macedonia, at least ten new buildings are constructed without building permits every year, and none of them are ever torn down. Therefore, as a journalist, one can easily discover cases of corruption simply by checking at the start of any construction project whether or not the necessary permits and licenses have been obtained.

Corruption in this area is stimulated because the earnings from the building constructions are very high amounting to up to 100% of the invested capital. This creates a large incentive for construction and enough money for bribing. According to the research, corruption in this area reaches the most senior officials, both in the central and local government. This is especially true when buildings are constructed on attractive locations.

Corruption in urbanism through illegal construction and the tolerance shown for it is enabled because of the following:

- Frequent changes in urban plans, which encourages the investors to start illegal building, and then manage to be registered in the future urban plans by paying a bribe;
- The problem is not dealt with from the beginning, so that once the people and companies move into the buildings the problem becomes a social one;
- Justification of keeping illegally-constructed buildings through arguments that there is not enough money in the municipal budgets for demolition; this covers up illegal work.

When investigating corruption cases in this area, it is recommended that one investigates the attitude of the authorities in the municipality towards the illegal

buildings, how consistent the authorities are in the implementation of the decisions for demolition, whose buildings are not demolished and who makes this decision, and for whom the law is most consistently applied. Furthermore, as journalists, you must continuously search for the history of why these investors are tolerated even when some do not respect the laws and regulations in the area.

Education and health are the next areas where journalists should investigate corruption, as corruption has far-reaching consequences in these areas. The existence and non-disclosure of corruption in education creates the risk of having pupils and students acquire corruptive habits during the personality-development process. On the other hand, although only part of the teaching staff is involved in the corruptive activities, by covering up the corruption, this very important profession is being degraded. All this makes the problem of corruption in education to be a very serious one.

When investigating corruption in education, journalists must take into account that the classical bribing with money is done more rarely. More often, there are other, more sophisticated forms of corruption. So, the so-called mediators are involved in the game through which the corruptive cases are done – they suggest that the students should take additional classes with the teacher or somebody close to the teacher which is outside of the regular school teaching, and the teachers' sympathies are also won through different products and recompensing (depending on the teachers' needs) by the businesses of the students' parents. In addition, the selection of the travel agencies that organize the student's excursions should be closely considered, as well as the selection of textbooks, selection of restaurants for graduation ceremonies, choice about renting parts of the school to certain citizens and companies, and most importantly, where the money from the rent ends up and whether those revenues are reported.

The journalists should consider that corruption in education is enabled by many things. Among them are:

- Weak institutions and mechanisms to protect whistle-blowing students corruption;

- The personal interest of the students involved in corruption to keep silent about the bribing;
- Teachers who keep silent because of solidarity for their corrupted colleagues, who remain unpunished, and the problem remains unresolved.

The main recommendations for the journalists to follow the corruption in education, are that they should increasingly investigate this present (but concealed) problem, talk more about this problem with the students by guaranteeing their anonymity, and pay frequent visits to the schools in the municipality.

The health sector is seriously jeopardized by corruption. The corruption in this sector is mainly done in two ways: during the procurement of medicines, medical materials, and equipment and during the provision of medical services to the citizens. In the first, corruption is done through procurement of medicines at much higher than actual prices, procurement of much larger quantities than are needed in order to receive a bonus on quantities, procurements without tenders, artificially created need for an emergent procurement in order to avoid the tendering procedure etc. With regard to the provision of services, there are so-called tariffs on the bribe amount depending on the type of service and the doctor's expertise. Because it is a matter of human health and people are ready to give anything to secure their own health, the corruption in the health sector is an especially covert one in society.

This corruption is enabled by:

- The non-existence of clear procedures for the procurement of medicines, medical materials, and equipment, as well as delaying the overall application of the so-called reference prices for procurement of these products;
- Lack of accurate medical records in health institutions about the consumed medicines and supplies;
- Poor control, transparency, responsibility, and accountability in health institutions;
- Lack of sufficient hospital facilities and medicaments to meet the needs of the people, allowing for additional corruptive charging for any emergency service;

- Doctors are connected with the suppliers, who give commission on the procured and prescribed medicaments,
- Bribes are seen as an expression of gratitude for curing an illness and saving human life.

When investigating corruption in the health sector, journalists should have frequent discussions with citizens and patients about their experiences, all the while guaranteeing their anonymity. The procurements in the health institutions should be most vigorously investigated, however, it is important that the connections between the doctors and directors of medicaments wholesale companies is investigated, as well as cases of conflict of interests among the doctors from the public sector with regard to their connections with private practices.

3. Investigative journalism

3.1. What is investigative journalism?

Although some people define investigative journalism simply as good journalism, and others as thorough reporting on certain topics, investigative journalism is more than that. Investigative journalism implies research conducted by the journalist himself, and based on his/her initiative, something is discovered that some person or organization is trying to keep secret. Therefore, being an investigative journalist implies being more proactive, rather than reactive.

Investigative journalism implies "digging" under the surface of daily events in order to tell the people what is really going on so that answers to the "why" and "how" are given in addition to the usual "who", "what", "when" and "where". One should bear in mind that an investigative story requires a great deal of time and effort. An investigative story reveals something which is difficult to prove because the people and institutions involved in the case often have a shared interest to keep it hidden.

In order to better understand how to conduct an investigative story, elements of the following stories should be taken into account:

- The investigative story uncovers and refers to some systematic problem, and not only to some isolated case affecting only one person.
- The investigative story reveals the incorrect operation of institutions and/or individuals, and refers to something that is usually done secretly.
- The investigative story shows that things do not work out as they should and indicates corruption, injustice, and violation of power.
- The investigative story is based on personal and genuine research conducted by the journalist and does not represent a simple transfer of the results found by state investigative bodies.

- The investigative story is supported by genuine documentation and is based on comprehensive interviews. That is why it requires more sources than other journalistic stories.
- The investigative story, like other journalistic stories, must be interesting for the public and affect the people and their everyday lives.

3.2. Problems of the journalists

From the very beginning, when defining investigative journalism, it should be clear that one should not come under the justifications why this type of journalism should not be dealt with. <== what?? Journalists from all around the world face problems during their research, not only those in Macedonia.

The most frequent problems related to investigative journalism are as follows:

- Lack of information and documents to support and verify the findings.
- Fear on the part of the editors and media proprietors to release stories, which might bring the medium into conflict with certain political structures.
- Fear on the part of the editors and media proprietors to release stories, which might provoke certain companies or other advertisers to withdraw commercials.
- Impossibility and disinterest on the part of the media to allocate special time and money to long-term research.
- Auto-censorship among the journalists to work on investigative stories due to the above-stated reasons and due to fear for their personal security.

These and many other similar problems closely related to investigative journalism are universal for many countries from all continents. Yet, those problems should not make one hesitant in one's search for the truth nor in disclosing information that some people and institutions want to remain secret. Therefore, you need to be persistent in your efforts to search for information. Utilize the possibilities stipulated by the Law on Free

Access to Public Information (2006) and refer to the constitutional provisions for freedom of information (article 16 of the Constitution of Republic of Macedonia).

If the media does not allow sufficient time for investigative journalism, it would be best if you can find time to work on your investigative story outside of office hours. Moreover, try to assure the editor and media proprietor of the importance of releasing the findings from your research. This would increase the audience's trust in your media, and more and more advertisers would like to place advertisements on your media. In addition, releasing investigative stories expands the freedom of journalism and access to information and strengthens the role of the journalists and media in the society.

3.3. Phases of the research process

The title “investigative story” implies that these stories primarily include some kind of research or investigation. It is a process comprised of several phases, starting with the idea for the topic of the research, and ending with the release of the story and observing the reactions and the outcome.

3.3.1. Identifying the topic for the research/investigation

The valuable topics for research are numerous and can be found everywhere. The journalist can identify the topics with his/her curiosity or through some alternative source. The best investigative stories come from people that want the public to learn something secret about somebody or some institution. Furthermore, an excellent source for investigative research can be angry and underprivileged people and companies who decided to share their stories with the journalists. In addition, a good investigative story can emerge from some seemingly everyday conversation with neighbours and friends, or from some usual information collection from a certain institution about some other story. You need to be alert at all times, because good investigative stories often emerge from the routine movements of the reporters. Put simply – an investigative story can sometimes emerge from a curious question concerning why things are as they are.

3.3.2. Setting up the assumption for the research

Once something is “scented” as a good investigative story, one must set certain assumptions about the research. The best starting point in this sense is to determine how things should function in order to see what does not work out in that way. The next question to ask concerns who wins and who loses in a certain situation. From the very beginning, two crucial questions should be asked – “why” and “how”. Why things happen in a certain way and how exactly it happens. By adhering to these steps and answering

all these questions, one can set good bases and assumptions for further research. In this phase, the journalist states precisely what will be investigated.

3.3.3. Development of strategy and research plan

Next, it is necessary to develop the strategy and research plan. These are needed to serve as a compass in the course of the research. Investigative stories are complex and comprehensive and require considerable time, effort, patience, and, in many cases, special funds. The research strategy and work plan for practical implementation of the research can help complete the research without any unnecessary procrastination and delays. The following questions can serve as a basis for the strategy development: what will be the focus of the research (what are we trying to prove), which documents are needed, who are the people to be interviewed, what can be searched for on the Internet, and what can be researched in the field. Furthermore, one needs to specify the research timeframe and whether certain funds are needed (and how much). During this phase, the topic and the research should be presented to the editors in order to assure them that it is worthwhile and cost-effective.

3.3.4. Searching and collecting documents

Investigative stories rely on good documentation. All the documents needed to prove the story should be listed in the research strategy. There are documented traces behind every person, institution, business event, or occurrence. All one needs to know is which documents are needed and where to find them. The required data can be found in the municipalities, public enterprises and institutions, ministries and their respective regional units, the Government, Central register, stock exchange, Committee on securities, Statistical Bureau. Furthermore, reports from the State Audit Institute and Anti-corruption committee, as well as school, medical, judicial, and police reports can all serve as excellent sources of information. Most of the documents are public or should be public. Ask for any document you believe is needed, without making assumptions about

whether it will be provided. Sometimes, documents are more available than you assume. Make a reference to the constitutional provisions about freedom of information and the obligation of the people and institutions to inform the public. If you face difficulties when acquiring the documents, refer for assistance in the Law on Free Access to Public Information. Do not always ask for documents from the issuing bodies. Ask for the documents from the other party (or parties), i.e. from the recipients of the documents. Do not get discouraged if obtaining some document delays the whole research. In addition, please take into account that the documents are the primary (but not the only) sources of research. Documents and written materials are not sufficient because the people writing the documents are not always telling the truth.

3.3.5. Searching for people and sources

Documents serve as support, but the people are the ones that make the story. Once all documents are provided for the investigative story, one needs to think about who should be contacted and interviewed so that all parts of the story mosaic are settled. Besides the main actors in the story, i.e. the ones that gain or lose from the problem or the procedure, one also needs to contact the people who saw what happened, as well as professionals in the respective area. One should not always look for the main leaders of the institutions. Sometimes the people of the so-called second echelon can be good sources of information, that is, the ones who are lower in the hierarchy of the organization. In addition, one should use each and every possible occasion to contact the people that previously held those positions or jobs which are the primary subject of investigation in the story. Once released from the consequences, these people can very often give valuable information for better understanding the context of the problem or occurrence.

3.3.6. Searching the Internet

The internet provides a great opportunity for obtaining important information and documents for your research, as well as for finding people who can be interviewed. On the internet, the background story information can be found, the experiences and practices in other countries can be researched, one can learn who and what has discussed the research topic, one can find biographical and contact information about the sources, and one can find photography which can be useful for your story. These days, the internet has become the basic tool for the work of the investigative journalist. However, when it comes to using information and data from the internet, please make sure that you are very careful to make sure it is reliable. Some things which can be helpful for checking the website and the reliability of the information are as follows: clearly stated sources, possibility to check the legitimacy of the information publisher, detailed contact information, regular updating of the website etc.

3.3.7. Direct observation on the field

Direct observation is the most powerful tool for any reporter. The fieldwork, i.e. the place where things are happening, enables you to enliven the story and make it interesting for the audience. Direct observation enables the reporter to gain a better understanding of the research topic. In addition, by visiting the place of the event, the reporter can alleviate much further work because witnesses and interviewing sources can be found there. When you directly observe the happenings which you are investigating, you will not need to rely on information received from other sources, i.e. "second hand", which might not be completely objective or reliable. The advantage of direct observation is that no one can refute what the reporter has seen or heard.

3.3.8. Setting the research timeframe

If you conceptualise your research as a small project, then it would be easier to understand why it is good to have an implementation timeframe. Once you assess the optimal time required for the research, inform the editor so that he/she can expect when

you will release your story. On the other hand, this will pressure you to be continuously alert and meet the deadline.

One of the main characteristics of investigative journalism is that it requires time. Make a realistic assessment of how much time is needed to find the necessary documents and sources and to interview them. In addition, once you find the documents and sources which were initially foreseen, maybe there will be a need for additional documents and talking to other people. In addition, you need to foresee that some of the talks can be postponed. When you assess the time necessary for the story, be realistic and optimal. Please make sure that you set the time and that it will be possible to make adjustments, but also take into account that the release of the story is always a potential race with the other media which might be working on the same story.

3.3.9. Assessment of the funds necessary for the research

Although there are rare cases when money, i.e. budget, is allocated for certain research in the editor's offices in the country, one still needs to assess whether there will be a need for extra expenses for certain things during the research in order to complete the story. It is a matter of certain trips that you might need to take, telephone calls, copying materials etc. Although in many cases the research expenses might be covered within the regular expenses, some research might require extra expenses, and it would be good to request special funds from your superiors. You need to be realistic and optimal, because sometimes because of lack of very small amounts of money you will not be able to complete the research and release the story. Please note that, despite the media you work for, research funds can be requested from press agencies, media non-governmental organizations, as well as from foreign donors.

3.3.10. Organizing the story and situational assessment

Once you provide the necessary documents and data and interview the sources, you need to organize the story and evaluate what is the most important information and

what are the most important findings you have collected. In order to best organize the story, it would be good if the available material is put in chronological order. In addition, you will have to assess whether all of the available material will be summarized and will be released in one story or whether you will release it in a series of separate stories. If you decide to release part after part of the findings, then it would be good if all the stories have one common title for easier recognition, for example “case XXX,” so that the audience can know that it is research related to the same case. It is very important that in the course of the research, you continuously assess the current situation so as to avoid being lost in the research and the story. This means that you must continuously know where the story is going, so that you can find the best moment (when you have sufficient materials) to release the story. Yet, one should note that the investigation requires time and you should not succumb to time pressure – if you need another source or document, wait for them, and do not release the story without them. On the other hand, it is important to evaluate the situation in order to see whether you are on the wrong path and whether you need to interrupt the research because you are wasting your time and the time of the editor’s office.

3.3.11. Final checking of the story

Before you release any of your stories, it is very important that you make another final check concerning whether each of the statements in the story is supported by hard evidence. You need to know if someone in your story is accusing somebody else without proper evidence, because you are not amnestied from responsibility, nor is the media you work for. Considering that the findings from your research can cause serious reactions and consequences, do not let allow room for even the most minor mistake. The rechecking of documents and data is of extreme importance and must be paid unusually great attention. Ask for assistance from professionals who can confirm the credibility of the available data and documents. Check each figure, name, and surname twice. Try to check all of the findings with multiple sources. This is very important because even some

unintentional or accidental mistakes can negatively affect the credibility of your story, you as a journalist, and the media you work for.

3.3.12. Writing and releasing the story

Although during the course of your research you may have collected a lot of information and different documents, and this might have disclosed some complex situations, the story you release must be simple and comprehensible for your audience. In order to write such story, you need to determine the point of view in the story by asking yourself the following questions – what is your story about, i.e. what are you trying to tell your audience with this story. Furthermore, you need to have clear and recognizable focus for your story. This will help you make a story that will be relevant for your audience. It is very important that you understand that the point of view in your story and its focus do not always agree with your initial hypothesis. It is often the case that the focus of your story is changed because of new findings and documents during the course of your investigation.

In order to avoid being lost in your own story, it is important for you to assess which of the collected data, documents and findings are not indispensable for the story and you can leave them aside, i.e. do not issue them. Remind yourself that you are writing a journalistic story, and not some scientific research or academic text.

For the audience to better understand your story, supplement the story with charts, tables, and frames where you can organize and present the main figures, participants in the investigation, and the chronology of events. Share the documents with your audience in order to increase their excitement, as well as their trust by showing original letters, notes, photography, and handwriting from the participants in the story.

The investigative story that you will publish should not remain only as one text in your newspaper or program on your radio or TV. You must continue the story by continuously publishing all new findings from the research, as well as each reaction or development concerning what was stated in the story. Actually, the point of investigative journalism is to provoke reactions for the improvement of some situation. This, in turn,

would finally lead to improving the life and well-being of the people. By publishing the outcome of the stories, the people that worked illegally, incorrectly, and contrary to the law will know that they can be discovered and revealed at any time. At the same time, the audience will know that the violations can be put to an end, and that in future they should come forward if they witness or have information about such activities.

4. Legal and ethical aspects

Investigative journalism discloses some things that certain people and institutions want to keep secret, and, most often, it contains accusations of irregularities, irregular work, or work contrary to the laws. This can cause certain consequences for the journalists, whereby some of the people or institutions involved in the stories can initiate court proceeding and sue them for libel or offence.

With regard to the legal aspects of investigative journalism, it is good to be familiar with the key legal provisions that guarantee the right to information to the journalists and media. For their interlocutors, there is a prescribed obligation to inform the public about their work, the provisions that guarantee the journalists certain access to information which somebody would not reveal, as well as provisions which protect the people and institutions from groundless accusations, i.e. libel and offence. The ethical standards of journalism are prescribed in the Code of journalists in Macedonia, adopted in 2001.

4.1. Freedom of public information

The basic legal framework, which guarantees the right to public information in Republic of Macedonia, is the Constitution. Besides the freedom of public information, article 16 of the Constitution (among other things) guarantees free access to information, the right to protection for the information source, and prohibition for censorship. This article shall guarantee the right to correction and response by the media. These constitutional provisions actually give the journalists the right to refer to them when asking for information about the work of certain institutions or people, especially that which is important to the public.

Constitution of Republic of Macedonia

Article 16

The freedom of personal conviction, conscience, thought, and public expression of thought is guaranteed.

The freedom of speech, public address, public information, and the establishment of institutions for public information is guaranteed.

Free access to information and the freedom of reception and transmission of information is guaranteed.

The right to reply via the mass media is guaranteed.

The right to a correction in the mass media is guaranteed.

The right to protect a source of information in the mass media is guaranteed.

Censorship is prohibited.

4.2. Free access to public information

Besides in the Constitution, the journalists are enabled free access to information by the relatively new law on free access to public information, adopted in 2006. Referring to the provisions of this Law, the journalists can ask for information verbally, in writing, or by e-mail from the state administration bodies and other institutes and institutions, municipal authorities, public institutes and services, public enterprises etc. Aside from certain cases, which are precisely stated in article 6 of this law, the holders of information are obligated to provide the information to the requestor within 30 and not later than 40 days from the day the request is received. Each holder of information is obligated to publicly announce the list of public information he possesses.

4.3. Protection of privacy and personal data

Besides the journalistic freedom and citizens' right to be informed, the people that the journalists use as sources or participants in their stories have their own rights and

protection. Each person has the right to protection of privacy, personal data, and personal integrity. Therefore, journalists should respect these rights for the protection of the citizens, except in cases when that is contrary to the public interest.

The protection of personal data and rights to privacy with regard to the processing of personal data are regulated as basic freedoms and rights of the citizens under the Law on Protection of Personal Data, from 2005. In article 2 of this law, personal data is defined as any information that refers to the identified natural person or the natural person who can be identified on the basis of the unique identification number of the citizen or who is identified on the basis of one or several features which are specific to their physical, mental, economic, cultural, and/or social identity.

4.4. Libel and offence

Journalists should be very careful when they publish their investigative stories, and should take into consideration that all findings should be supported by relevant evidence. Accuracy, balance (representation of all parties in the story), and fair approach (unbiased approach towards all of the parties in the story) are the basis for each journalistic story, and therefore, for the investigative story as well. According to the Macedonian Criminal Code, libel and offence are regarded as criminal acts. These two acts are regulated in the articles 172 and 173 of the Criminal Code. On the other hand, the Code envisages a range of cases for which the criminal acts of libel and offence are not punishable, as stipulated in article 176 of the Code.

4.5. Ethical issues

The ethical issues in journalism in Macedonia are regulated by the Code of journalists of Macedonia, which was adopted in 2001. Signatories of the Code of journalists are the journalists of almost all editors' offices in Macedonia, all of whom are committed that their journalists will respect the norms of the Code during their work. The Code provides a framework of basic ethical principles and professional standards by which journalists

must behave. The Council of Honour at the Association of journalists of Macedonia is responsible for the implementation of the Code.

4.6. Code of journalists in Macedonia

PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT

Freedom of the media is undeniable.

The main duty of the journalist is to respect the truth and the right of the public to be informed, in accordance with Article 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia.

The journalist's role is that of transmitter of information, ideas, and opinions. Thus, they have a right to comment. By respecting the ethical values and professional standards regarding the presentation of information, the journalists shall be honest, objective, and will report promptly.

The right and obligation of journalists is to strive to prevent censorship and distortion of news.

Having in mind their role in the building of democracy and civic society, journalists shall defend human rights, dignity, and freedom; shall respect the pluralism of ideas and opinions; shall contribute to the strengthening of the legal state; and shall participate in the control over the government and in other subjects in public life.

BASED ON THESE PRINCIPLES AND ETHICAL VALUES:

1.

Journalists have the right to free access to all sources of information that are of public interest.

Journalists shall publish correct, verified information and will not conceal essential information or forge documents.

If given information that cannot be confirmed or if it is a matter of assumption, i.e. speculation, it should be noted as such when published.

Information ought to be verified as much as possible.

2.

If a journalist is prevented from accessing a piece of information, he/she has the right to inform the public about that.

3.

Journalists shall strive to provide publications of correction, denial, or reply in cases when previously published information is found to be incorrect.

4.

Journalists shall point out the source(s) of information, but if the source demands to remain anonymous, the journalist shall respect his wishes.

5.

Journalists shall respect the rule of law and will publish nothing that is contrary to the public interest.

6.

Journalists must not use the media he/she works in for publication or concealing of information in order to gain personal benefit.

Bribes, corruption, and racketeering cannot be put in context with the journalistic profession. ←what??

Influence from advertising and other commercial motives on the freedom of informing must not be allowed.

There should be demarcation between advertising and journalistic text with illustration.

7.

Journalists shall respect the privacy of every person, except in cases when this goes

against the public interest.

Journalists are obliged to respect personal pain and grief.

8.

The manner of informing about cases of accidents, elemental disasters, war, family tragedies, sickness, and court procedures must be free of sensationalism.

The principle of presumption of innocence, i.e. reporting for all involved parties in a legal dispute without suggesting verdict, will be applied when reporting on court procedures.

9.

Journalists must not interview or photograph children under 16 years of age without the agreement of their parents or legal guardians, unless otherwise in accordance with the children rights.

The same refers to people with special needs who are unable to decide rationally for themselves.

10.

Journalists shall not consciously create or process information that jeopardizes human rights and freedoms, shall not use hate speech, and shall not encourage discrimination of any sort (nationality, religion, sex, social class, language, sexual orientation, political orientation...)

11.

Journalists shall observe all general social standards of decency and shall respect the ethnic, cultural, and religious differences among peoples in the Republic of Macedonia.

12.

Plagiarism is unacceptable.

Quotes must be omitted if the author or the source is not specified.

13.

Journalists ought to make a distinction between facts and opinions, news and comments.

14.

Reporting on political processes, especially elections, must be impartial, balanced, and fair.

Journalists must maintain professional distance from the political subjects.

15.

Journalists must maintain the culture of speech and ethics.

Impolite communication with the public is contrary to the code of professional journalism.

16.

Journalists shall defend the reputation and dignity of their profession, shall urge mutual solidarity and difference in opinions, and will not misuse their role in the media for personal vendettas against other persons, including his colleagues.

17.

Journalists have the right to refuse to perform a given task if it defies the principles of this code.

FINAL PROVISIONS

The journalists who work in accordance with this code enjoy support from their media outlets and professional organization.

In accordance with the Laws of the Republic of Macedonia, the journalists shall accept only the court of their colleagues regarding the profession and shall be free from political and other influences.

The Council of Honour is responsible for observing the principles of this code.

