

## **Guidelines for Ethical Reporting for Online Media** (Application of the Code of Journalists in the online sphere)

The Code of Journalists refers to all journalists and applies to all media. However, in order to apply the Code in the online sphere in a better and more efficient manner, it is necessary to provide adequate interpretation and guidance for the journalists working in the online media. In these Guidelines, online media refers to all electronic publications that have special websites and that regularly publish journalistically-edited news-informative contents intended for the general public.

The need for development of these Guidelines arose from the fact that the development of new information and communication technologies and online media changed the current way of creating and disseminating information and posed new challenges for the professional journalists in terms of the way they process and publish certain topics when it comes to journalistic reporting.

These Guidelines are professional instructions for editors, journalists and all other content creators working in online media, aimed at assisting the development of a strong and credible online media self-regulation system and strengthening the independent, professional and accountable journalistic reporting in the online sphere.

The Guidelines shall apply to all members of the Council of Media Ethics (CMEM), as well as to all online media about which complaints have been filed to the CMEM. This means that when reviewing the complaints, the CMEM's Press Complaints Commission, in addition to the provisions of the Code of Journalists and the codes of international journalistic associations, shall also take into account these Guidelines. The Guidelines likewise apply to all information and content that the online media publish on social networks or other Internet platforms.

The first part of the Guidelines provides explanations for the application of the provisions of the Code of Journalists, and the second part adds special provisions that apply solely to online media.

## **I. Provisions of the Code of Journalists**

### **PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT:**

The freedom of the media is undeniable.

The main duty of the journalists is to respect the truth and the right of the public to be informed in accordance with Article 16 of our Constitution.

Journalists have the role of transmitters of information, ideas and opinions and have the right to comment. By respecting the ethical values and professional standards regarding the transmission of information, the journalists shall be honest, objective and shall report accurate information.

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

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

### **Guidelines for applying the principles of conduct**

01. Online media shall respect the right of the citizens to receive timely, verified, accurate and objective information on topics that are of public importance and shall in no case allow the distortion of news and the manipulation of information and data.
02. Online media, when collecting information, documents and photographs, shall use only authorized means and methods, and shall in no case use blackmail, threats or harassment of persons they report on.
03. Given the specifics of online journalism and the real need for rapid publication of information, online media shall still take constant care not to violate the basic principle of accurate and objective information.
04. The online media shall be obliged to appoint an editor who shall be responsible for each content published in the online media. This shall likewise mean accountability for content downloaded from other media or platforms.
05. Online media editors shall ensure that all editorial staff members are familiar with the content of these Guidelines and that they respect them in their work.

### Article 1

The journalist has the right to free access to all sources of information that are of public interest. The journalist shall publish accurate, verified information and shall not conceal essential information or forge documents.

If given information cannot be confirmed or if it is a matter of assumption, i.e. speculation, it should be noted and published. The accurateness of the information ought to be verified as much as possible.

#### **Guidelines for the application of Article 1 of the Code:**

- 1.1. Online media shall report solely on the basis of facts the origin of which is known to the journalist, by citing various sources of information and, as a rule, by relying on clearly identified and credible sources.
- 1.2. Online media shall not hide or conceal important information the publication of which could affect the interpretation or the understanding of the content of the report by the readers. The concealing of facts that can significantly affect the formation of the view on an event or person is equivalent to deliberate distortion of reality and creation of misinformation.
- 1.3. Online media shall not publish inaccurate, biased or manipulatively shaped texts, photographs or other content that deliberately misleads the readers. Photomontages, processed photographs or other interventions in authentic documents must be clearly distinguished from the original and marked as such with adequate text.
- 1.4. Online media shall not publish unfounded accusations, slander, rumors, fabricated interviews, anonymous correspondence and other information the credibility of which cannot be assessed.
- 1.5. Online media shall always endeavor to cite the source of the information by specifically and precisely referring to that source.
- 1.6. When using information obtained from social networks, websites, blogs or other Internet sources, online media shall carefully check their reliability and credibility.
- 1.7. Online media shall not modify already published information in a way that changes its original meaning, context or presentation. The modification of published content is acceptable solely with an indication of the reason and the time when it was made.

### Article 2

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

#### **Guidelines for the application of Article 2 of the Code:**

- 2.1. When reporting, online media shall always strive to listen to and present all opposing parties. When a party refuses to make a statement, it must be stated in the report, whereby the public shall be informed that some institutions, public office holders or politicians are not transparent, that is, it shall be informed about the reason why the report lacks a certain point of view.
- 2.2. Online media shall not hide or conceal important information the publication of which could affect the interpretation or the understanding of the content of the report by the readers. The

concealing of facts that can significantly affect the formation of the view on an event or person is equivalent to deliberate distortion of reality and creation of misinformation.

### Article 3

The journalist shall strive to provide the publication of a correction, denial or reply in cases when given information is found to be inaccurate.

#### Guidelines for the application of Article 3 of the Code:

- 3.1. Online media shall be obliged to timely correct any published information that is found to be inaccurate or to supplement the information that is incomplete. This particularly applies to information that could cause material damage to someone or damage the reputation of someone.
- 3.2. The reply or the correction shall be published in a noticeable place, with an appropriately emphasized note that it is a response to or correction of a previously published information. The length of the reply shall be appropriate to the originally published text.  
In the published reply or correction, next to the title, the link to the text to which the reply, that is, the correction refers shall likewise be stated.

### Article 4

The journalist shall point out the source of information, but if the source demands to remain anonymous the journalist shall protect him/her.

#### Guidelines for the application of Article 4 of the Code:

- 4.1. Online media have the right and obligation to protect the identity of confidential sources of information.
- 4.2. In order to ensure that that the source does not reveal the information due to self-interest, greed, revenge or deliberate misrepresentation, the online media shall accept the request for confidentiality of the source only if there are serious reasons therefor and if there is a high public interest. If the editorial staff decides that the information should be published, it shall state in the text itself that the information has been verified by one or more confidential credible sources.
- 4.3. Online media shall not abuse the provision on protection of confidential sources and shall not rely on non-existent “anonymous sources” in order to manipulate with the information or to publish false and fabricated information that misleads the public.

### Article 5

The journalist shall respect the laws of the country, but shall not publish or conceal anything that is contrary to the public interest.

### **Guidelines for the application of Article 5 of the Code:**

- 5.1. Online media shall report accurately, objectively, fully and timely on the events of public interest, thus respecting the right of the public to know the truth.
- 5.2. Online media shall respect and protect the individual rights of individuals, except in exceptional situations when the public interest prevails over the individual rights (right to privacy, right to reputation and dignity, etc.).
- 5.3. Before deciding to publish the content, the journalist should carefully check whether it is really of public interest. This especially applies to topics related to corruption, organized crime or abuse of power by public office holders, when the journalist has a dilemma whether to publish an information that is of public interest, but that may violate the right to privacy, the right to reputation or other legal provisions.
- 5.4. Editors and journalists in online media shall be guided by the public interest and shall not allow the private and business interests of third parties, including the interests of the owners, to influence their work and editorial content.

### **Article 6**

The journalist must not use the media he/she works in for publication or concealing of information in order to gain personal benefit. Bribe, corruption and racketeering cannot be put in context with the journalistic profession. Influence from advertising and other commercial motives on the freedom of informing must not be allowed. There should be a demarcation between advertising and journalistic text with illustration.

### **Guidelines for the application of Article 6 of the Code:**

- 6.1. Under no circumstances shall journalists working in online media accept gifts or services that would influence their professionalism.
- 6.2. Online media journalists shall never produce and/or sign texts that represent commercial or political advertising.
- 6.3. Commercial and political advertisements, as well as sponsored texts shall be visibly separated from the editorial content and marked as such with appropriate terms (paid space, sponsored content, political advertising, promotional video, etc.).
- 6.4. Sponsored texts shall clearly indicate the source of the sponsorship.

### **Article 7**

The journalist shall respect the privacy of every person, except in cases when that is contrary to the public interest. The journalist is obliged to respect the personal pain and grief.

### **Guidelines for the application of Article 7 of the Code:**

- 7.1. Online media shall avoid intruding into the private lives of individuals, except in cases when it is not an important matter of public interest and shall very carefully review the reasons for disclosing information from the private life of someone, before deciding to address the topic. In

- doing so, they shall always keep in mind that the public interest comes first, and not the curiosity of their audience.
- 7.2. When it comes to reporting on the method of work of public office holders, politicians, or other public figures, information about their private lives shall be published only when it is in the public interest and in direct connection with the topic that is being reported. The notice shall not mention the names of their family members, unless they are directly related to the event that is being reported. The notice shall not publish personal data and information that could violate the privacy of a child.
  - 7.1. The topics related to personal tragedies shall always be carefully addressed, and the persons affected by the tragedy shall be approached with compassion and discretion. No names or photographs of victims shall be published when reporting on accidents, crimes, suicides or domestic violence. No data shall be published from which the identity of the victim or the perpetrator could be indirectly revealed before it is officially communicated by the competent institutions. The names and photographs of missing persons shall be published only with the permission of the relatives or the competent authorities involved in the search for the missing person.
  - 7.2. When reporting on suicides, the online media shall be very careful, assessing whether the information about the event is of public interest and avoiding publishing names, photographs and detailed descriptions of the circumstances under which the event took place. The media should keep in mind that vulnerable groups of citizens can be strongly influenced by media reports on suicides, and as a result make an attempt on their life, repeating the same act, and especially if the media describes the crime in detail, in a sensationalist and explicit manner.
  - 7.3. When reporting on rape victims or victims of sexual violence, the identity of the persons shall not be revealed without the consent of the victim, and in the case of children – without the consent of the parents or the guardians and the child himself/herself (taking into account the age of the child), if there is a public interest and it is in the best interest of the child. The online media shall allow the consent to be withdrawn at any time, if requested by the parent or the guardian.
  - 7.4. Online media shall not report on the health status of a person (with a physical or mental disability) without the consent of the person himself/herself or his/her parent/guardian. The editorial staff of the online media shall assess whether the publication of data on the health status of an individual is a matter of public interest.
  - 7.5. Online media shall not publish private data, statuses, videos, private photographs and other personal publications on the social networks without the consent of the author, unless the status of the specific publication is marked as “public”. Exceptions to this rule are cases when the public interest prevails over the right to privacy and when it is necessary for the purpose and topic of the reporting. In those cases, the editorial staff shall carefully weigh what is in the public interest and to what extent it justifies the invasion of the right to privacy of the individual.
  - 7.6. If the private data and publications about one person also include private data and records about other persons, the online media shall delete or exclude that data in order to protect the privacy of other persons, unless in this case the public interest prevails over the right to privacy.
  - 7.7. Online media shall not transmit information on conduct, correspondence and conversations related to the private lives of individuals, unless the public interest prevails over the right to privacy of the person.
  - 7.7.1. Online media shall not publish photographs of people from private events without their consent, unless it is in the public interest. When publishing photographs taken in public spaces, the online media shall be careful not to violate the privacy of people who happened to be at the photographed location. Before deciding whether to publish a photograph from the private lives of public office holders, the online media shall carefully weigh whether there is a public interest that justifies the violation of the privacy of the public office holder.

## Article 8

The manner of informing in cases of accidents, natural disasters, wars, family tragedies, diseases, court proceedings must be free from sensationalism. The principle of presumption of innocence, should be respected in court proceedings and it should be reported on all parties involved in the dispute, without suggesting a judgment.

### Guidelines for the application of Article 8 of the Code:

(Accidents, natural disasters, conflicts, terrorism)

- 8.1. When reporting on accidents, natural disasters, epidemics, violent extremism and terrorism, online media shall be extremely careful and shall avoid the publication of sensationalist headlines and unverified information, taking care not to create further agitation and panic among the public.
- 8.2. Online media shall be especially careful when publishing footage of violence, brutality or suffering, whereby a priority shall be given to the protection of the dignity of the victims and the persons affected in any way by the events.
- 8.3. Online media shall avoid the use of overly emotional expressions that can further hurt or agitate the victims, that overemphasize their vulnerability or violate their human dignity.
- 8.4. Online media shall avoid focusing on the suffering and the fears of only one party in the conflict as this may divide the parties into “attackers” and “victims”, suggesting that punishing the “attackers” is the solution to the conflict. Instead, they shall seek to present the suffering, fears and grievances of all parties in the conflict.
- 8.5. When publishing interviews or statements of perpetrators of violence and crime, online media shall be careful not to put themselves in a position to promote their ideas, thereby encouraging people to commit crimes or spread hate speech. Online media shall keep in mind that interviewing the perpetrators can be painful for the victims and their families.
- 8.6. Online media shall carefully review the information and photographs related to conflicts and violence published on social networks and other platforms. In doing so, they shall avoid publishing content that portrays crime or other violence, unless it is of particular importance for the public interest. In that case, they shall publish a warning that a content follows that may upset the audience.
- 8.7. The conversations with witnesses of accidents and disasters, with injured and sick people, shall be conducted by the online media with care, compassion and full understanding of the physical and emotional condition of these people.

(reporting from court proceedings)

- 8.8. When reporting on investigative and court proceedings, online media shall cite information from official investigative and judicial institutions, without a sensationalist approach to the information. In doing so, they shall pay particular attention to the terms they use for the status of the persons in the procedures on which they report, in order not to violate their right to presumption of innocence.
- 8.9. Before a final judgment has been made, the identity of the suspects may be disclosed when: a) the suspect performs a public function, b) when it is about a person who is known to the public, and there is a connection between the act for which the court proceeding is being conducted and the activity for which the person is known to the public, c) when the suspect himself/herself has

agreed his/her identity to be public, and d) in circumstances in which the public interest justifies the disclosure of identity.

- 8.10. Online media shall not report with prejudice and shall not make hasty judgments about the guilt of the suspects, nor shall they prejudge the outcome of the court proceedings, so as not to influence the judicial authorities and the course of the proceedings.
- 8.11. Online media shall generally avoid photographing or mentioning the names of the witnesses in criminal proceedings, as well as the names of their relatives and friends, unless stating them is necessary to fully, fairly and accurately report on a particular trial and if it does not affect the course of the court proceedings. When reporting on trials including minors, online media shall be obliged to take care of the protection of their identity.
- 8.12. Online media shall be especially careful when reporting on witnesses to crimes who have been granted the status of protected witness by law.
- 8.13. Online media shall likewise be obliged to publish information on the rejection of an accusation or the release of persons about whom they previously published that they were suspects, defendants or for whom a court proceeding was being conducted.

## Article 9

The journalist must not interview or photograph children under the age of 16<sup>1</sup> without the consent of the parents or guardians, unless it is in accordance with the children rights. The same refers to people with disabilities, who are not able to decide rationally.

### Guidelines for the application of Article 9 of the Code:

- 9.1. Online media shall be extremely careful when reporting on children and minors, thus respecting the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In their reporting, online media shall protect the best interests of children, including advocating for children matters and promoting their rights.
- 9.2. Online media shall not disclose information from which the identity of the child can be revealed in any way (such as information on the family, the place of residence, the school, etc.), in order for the child not to be endangered or put at risk.
- 9.3. Online media must not interview or photograph children and minors under the age of 18 without the consent or presence of a parent or guardian. The consent must be obtained in circumstances that ensure that the child and guardian are in no way coerced into giving it and that the decision is made in consultation with an adult whom the child trusts. In attempts to report on child-related topics, online media shall consult with those closest to the child and most familiar with his/her situation and who can best assess the effects of the political, social and cultural consequences of any reporting on children.
- 9.4. Journalists in online media shall not identify minors under the age of 18 in cases where they are in any way involved in criminal proceedings as witnesses, victims, defendants or perpetrators.

## Article 10

The journalists shall not conscientiously create or process information that jeopardize the human rights and freedoms, shall not use hate speech and shall not incite violence and discrimination on any grounds (nationality, religion, race, sex, social class, language, sexual orientation, political affiliation...).

### Guidelines for the application of Article 10 of the Code:

- 10.1. Given the danger to individuals, groups or society as a whole, online media shall never incite hatred or intolerance based on race, skin color, origin, nationality or ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, affiliation to a marginalized group, language, citizenship, social origin, education, religion or belief, political belief, other belief, disability, age, family or marital status, property status, health status, personal status and social status or any other basis.
- 10.2. When reporting on the problems of different groups and communities in society, online media shall be extremely careful, use correct and standardized terminology and shall not use

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<sup>1</sup> The age limit set in the Convention on the Rights of the Child is 18 years of age. The Convention is available at: <https://www.unicef.org/northmacedonia/mk/%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%B8/%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B4%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%BE>

offensive comments or expressions that shall unconsciously create or reinforce stereotypes about them.

- 10.3. Online media shall make efforts to raise the awareness of the negative consequences of hate speech, identify and expose such speech, as well as to point out the actors who produce and use it. Online media shall create content that opposes hate speech and discrimination on various grounds.
- 10.4. Online media shall be responsible for regularly reviewing and promptly removing user comments that are published under journalistic content on websites or social networks, and that contain hate speech and have the potential to cause harmful consequences in society.
- 10.5. In exceptional cases of extreme hate speech by individual or groups, it is the duty of the online media to publicly criticize their views, thus emphasizing the detrimental consequences thereof on the wider community and the groups to which they are addressed.

#### **Article 11**

The journalist shall adhere to the generally accepted social standards of decency and respect for the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity.

#### **Guidelines for the application of Article 11 of the Code:**

- 11.1 Online media shall seek to raise awareness of the equality of all individuals or groups in society and shall emphasize the need to respect diversity as an integral part of human rights. In their reporting, they shall strive to achieve a balance in the treatment and presentation of the experiences, views and needs of different individuals and communities.
- 11.2 Online media must not equate the activities, views or actions of individuals belonging to a particular group with those of the whole group. They must not emphasize the characteristics related to the affiliation to different groups (such as ethnicity, race, religion, cultural background, mental or physical health, etc.), except in cases when it is directly related to the events that are being reported.
- 11.3 In order to ensure inclusive reporting, online media should strive to diversify sources, that is, to cover a wide range of issues and topics related to diversity in society.

## Article 12

Plagiarism is unacceptable. Quotations must not be used without specifying the source or the author.

### Guidelines for the application of Article 12 of the Code:

- 12.1 Texts and other content published in online media should be signed by a journalist or other author.
- 12.2 Journalists in online media shall not sign texts, photographs, illustrations, videos and audio recordings of other authors and media as their own. Before using news or excerpts from other media, they shall consult the rules on using the media content of the media that produced them, if that media has adopted and published such rules. Any content taken from another source should be properly marked.
- 12.3 Online media shall publish short excerpts from copyright works in their reports only with a clear indication that it is a quotation, thus stating the name of the author, the media that published the specific copyright work and, if possible, the link that leads to the published work.
- 12.4 Online media shall draw up their own rules, if they do not already have them, that shall state the manner and scope of downloading and using content from other media and authors, such as: the way of highlighting the source from which the content is transmitted, the way of quoting excerpts from the original copyright text, the way of editing the rights to fully use copyright texts of others, etc.
- 12.5 Photographs published in online media shall be signed with the name and surname of the author, the media or the source where the photograph was originally published. If the photograph is protected as a copyright, the online media should seek permission from the author to republish it.

## Article 13

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

### Guidelines for the application of Article 13 of the Code:

- 13.1. Online media shall clearly separate and mark comments from other journalistic content.
- 13.2. When transmitting claims of political entities or other sources, online media shall strive whenever possible to verify those claims, that is, not to be mere transmitters of “served facts” by someone else. By doing so, they shall enable the audience to make a distinction between facts and speculations or misinformation, especially when it comes to important and current events and topics.
- 13.3. When reporting on each topic or issue, online media shall strive to contribute to a better understanding thereof through careful consideration of the facts and their proper connection, in order to present the full context and the different angles and points of view on the topic.

## Article 14

Reporting on political processes, especially elections, must be impartial and balanced. The journalist must make professional distance from the political entities.

### **Guidelines for the application of Article 14 of the Code:**

- 14.1. When informing about political processes and election campaigns, online media shall report on all political entities with accurate and verified information and in an impartial manner.
- 14.2. When reporting on mutual accusations of the political entities in the campaign, the online media shall inform impartially and objectively and shall avoid using inflammatory rhetoric and accusations. In each such reporting, the online media shall strive to state the opinion of the other party as well, and when it is not objectively possible (live reporting, press conference, etc.) they shall emphasize that the response of the other party shall be additionally provided.
- 14.3. If the online media publish results of public opinion polls, they should do so in an objective and correct manner, by publishing all the necessary information, which shall enable the public to obtain an objective picture of the predicted election results: the size or representativeness of the sample, the margin of error, the period of implementation and the party that ordered the survey.

### **Article 15**

The journalist must maintain a culture of speech and ethics. The inappropriate communication with the public is incompatible with the journalistic profession.

### **Guidelines for the application of Article 15 of the Code:**

- 15.1. Journalists in online media shall avoid using impolite or vulgar language in their journalistic content (swearing, abusive words, derogatory expressions). The use of vulgar or impolite language must be editorially justified in terms of the public interest and the expectations of the audience, regardless of the journalistic genre in which it is used.
- 15.2. Online media shall keep in mind that the use of vulgar or impolite language may upset or offend certain segments of the audience. In cases when the online media has decided to use or transmit such language, it shall appropriately warn the audience.

### **Article 16**

The journalist shall preserve the reputation and dignity of his/her profession, encourage mutual solidarity and difference in opinions and shall not misuse the media he/she works in for personal vendetta against other persons, including his/her colleagues.

#### **Guidelines for the application of Article 16 of the Code:**

- 16.1. Journalists, reporters and other persons hired in online media shall not be involved in activities that could in any way jeopardize the credibility of the journalistic profession and the media in which they work.
- 16.2. Online media shall constantly strive to ensure independence and integrity in their work, thus respecting the right of journalists to refrain from working against their convictions, as well as the right to participate in the decision-making policy of the media in which they are employed or hired.
- 16.3. Editors in online media shall protect journalists and oppose any attempt at censorship or pressure that may jeopardize the free performance of journalistic work.
- 16.4. Journalists in online media shall respect the editorial policy of the media in which they work and shall participate in its creation, implementation and evaluation.
- 16.5. Online media shall encourage and take care of the mutual relations and respect among colleagues in other media and shall refrain from publicly expressing or publishing content that offends or harms them.

### **Article 17**

The journalist has the right to refuse a given task if it is contrary to the principles of this Code.

#### **Guidelines for the application of Article 17 of the Code:**

- 17.1. If the journalist who works in the online media is instructed to perform a task or write a text that is contrary to the provisions of the Code of Journalists, he/she has the right to refuse the task, citing the Code and these Guidelines.

## **II. Additional guidelines for online media reporting**

### **Article 18 – Archiving and permanent recording of published content**

- 18.1 Online media shall regularly store and archive published texts and other content on their website, that is, they shall make them available through search engines.
- 18.2 When republishing archival materials, online media should take into account the changed context in which the material is published and state that it is archival material.
- 18.3 The online media shall permanently delete a material from the archive available through search engines if it is a text that contains hate speech, discrimination or other content that is not allowed by law and/or if there is a court order therefor.
- 18.4 In case of permanent deletion of the content from the archive, the online media shall be obliged to publish a notice on the link where the deleted content was published stating that it has been removed and the reason therefor, the title, the publication date, the name of the author and the date of withdrawal, that is, deletion.
- 18.5 The online media shall keep the deleted, that is, withdrawn content, as well as other relevant information on the specific case, in its internal archive.

### **Article 19 – Transparency of the online media – Imprint**

- 18.6 Online media shall be obliged to publish an Imprint on their websites in a visible and specially marked place with the following data: name of the legal or natural person that owns the media, name of the accountable person, address of the headquarters, contact telephones, e-mail address, name of the editor, composition of the editorial staff, as well as all other data that confirm the relevance of the media and allow the reader to submit an application or complaint regarding the reporting of the online media.

### **Article 20 – Responsibility for publishing comments from readers**

- 20.1. Online media shall likewise be responsible for the content of the comments from their readers published on the website of the online media in the comment section, under the journalistic content.
- 20.2. The online media shall remove all comments that contain: incitement to violence or other crimes, hate speech, discrimination, threats and other forms of jeopardizing the rights and safety of individuals, groups, institutions, regardless of whether they are directly or indirectly related to the text or the topic covered therein.
- 20.3. The online media shall define rules for editing the comments of the readers in the free comment section under the published texts and content. These rules shall be published on the platforms where the content is published and they shall contain: information on the registration of the comments; compliance with the rules on commenting, unallowed content in the comments, reason for removing the comments, etc.  
Online media shall likewise be responsible for the content of the comments posted on the journalistic content of the media published on their profiles on the social networks.