



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union

Skopje, 11 December 2018

**E-Society.mk Conference: Media literate citizens for
accountable institutions**

Venue: Holiday Inn Hotel, 11h00

Ambassador Samuel Žbogar

Head of the EU Delegation

Ladies and gentlemen,

- **In this digital era, consumption and exchange of information seem to have become a double-edged sword.**
- On one hand, **communication has never been easier.** Messaging or making calls through *Viber, What's Up* or *Skype* have diminished geographical distances as a barrier to communication. **All kinds of info are available at the click of a button.** Mobile phones have become our 'extended arm' – and for a good reason. But on the other hand, this is how we have become bombarded with content from a myriad of sources. **And this is how fake news and disinformation have become an inevitable part of our digital interaction.**
- Media literacy is to a great extent **ability to recognise fake news.** But it is much more than that. It is a **responsible debate, pluralism of opinion and critical thinking.** It is needed for **people not only to engage with the media but to engage with society through the media.** In this way, it is creating environment that is conducive to **better public control of the work of state institutions.** In brief, media literacy is essential for a healthy democracy.
- This is why the EU is promoting media literacy in both its current and future members. Citizens are encouraged to express and elaborate on their opinions. But they are also enabled to assume responsibility while playing an active role in democratic

processes. They need to listen to different opinion, debate with someone's views (not personality), recognise disinformation and respect others' privacy and dignity.

- Media literacy also enables citizens to use media for raising the issue of **accountability of institutions**. That is how they utilise public resources, for what purpose and with what results. **The right to information**, together with the freedom of opinion and expression, **is the cornerstone of democracy**. But, I repeat, every freedom should be exercised with responsibility.

- In the country, **the media regulator has initiated a network for media literacy**, involving state and non-state actors. This is a welcoming development. Yet **systematic approach and cooperation among all stakeholders is essential in order to have satisfactory results**. There should be update of schools' curricula, awareness raising campaigns on media literacy and involvement of civil society, media and journalists.

- The EU is financing a couple of projects on media literacy in the country. These projects complement the endeavours of domestic stakeholders. These efforts will need a constant upgrade, given ever growing forms of communication.

- **As I said, new technologies might be a double-edged sword. But it is up to us to find a way to capitalise on their immense advantages for the democracy**. Just as we need to avoid the traps they carry along. Together. Thank you.