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**Report of the jury on the selection of best stories for the contest for “EU Award for Investigative Journalism in 2014”**

In light of the procedure for selecting the best investigative stories contest for the “EU Award for Investigative Journalism in 2014” the five-member jury composed of:

**Erol Rizaov**, editor-commentator in **„Utrinski vesnik“**

**Marina Tuneva, Director of the Council of Media ethics**

**Zoran Bojarovski, journalist and producer in TV Alfa**

**Sefer Tahiri, professor at the SEEU**

**Biljana Petkovska, Director of the Macedonian Institute for Media, reached a**

**DECISION**

To award the **first prize** in the contest for investigative stories published in 2014, to **Sashka Cvetkovska**, for **„The Spy“ landowner** story, published on the Internet television „Nova TV“.

The Story reveals that the former director of the Administration for Security and Counterintelligence owns property worth millions in Prague, which has not been declared in his property declaration form.

In the opinion of the jury, the author handled an extremely important topic related to the transparency of officials’ property, which raises the issue of abuse of power. The story presents a comprehensive and thorough investigative endeavour, by offering extensive information that are effectively and systematically presented and visualized. The story is presented through an easy narrative, in an attractive and understandable manner. **The aspect of cooperation with a journalist from Prague, Czech Republic, where the properties of the respective official were investigated, augments its significance. The very fact that the story focuses on one of the most powerful people in the country, speaks about the challenges that investigative journalism is facing with, but also about the courage and professional integrity that a journalist should possess, in order to be able to uncompromisingly criticise the imperfections of the system.**

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The **second prize** is awarded to Ljubisha Arsik for the series of articles on the topic of **„Are the two missing AFIS systems used to produce illegal biometric documents for voters in elections?“**, published in the weekly news magazine „Fokus“.

The story reveals an organized network that involves senior government officials, state and educational institutions, which suspiciously effectuate procurement of scientific laboratory equipment which was further inappropriately allocated to a single government portfolio, in several complex relations. Moreover, with a few illogical and illegal Government decisions, part of the equipment disappears, which raises suspicion that it is being used for making illegal biometric documents used for voting in elections. The jury considers that the author elaborates politically actual topic of exceptional public interest, which discloses a series of unlawful actions of the highest state institutions, and raises suspicion about serious violations of democratic processes in the country. The story abounds with many sources, supported with documents, and the essence of the problem is represented from multiple angles and perspectives.

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The **third prize** is awarded to **Biljana Nikolovska** for the series of TV articles on the topic of **„Tamara Dimovska Case: How the healthcare system kills a child“**, broadcasted on TV Telma.

The story reveals anomalies and inoperativeness of the healthcare system, through disclosure of the story on the tragic fate of the little Tamara, which instigated great attention and reactions among the public. Public pressure resulted in resignations of directors of the Health Insurance Fund, and other children who sought help from competent institutions, in a short period of time, received approval for treatment abroad.

The jury concluded that the journalist sequentially and consistently processes a relevant issue of great public importance, which reveals system inconsistencies in the health system, portrayed through the case of little Tamara and the numerous contradictions in authorising treatment abroad. The mode in which the problem is presented clearly anticipates the consequences and reporting is based on using multiple sources.

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**15 authors, with 18 stories** published in print, electronic and Internet media, participated In the contest for “EU Award for Investigative Journalism in 2014“.

**The general appraisal of the jury** is that investigative stories are still a rare journalistic genre in the media in the country. Apart from few media that intensively foster investigative journalism, newsrooms are scarcely allocating staff and resources for complex and long-term investigations, which sometimes have to be carried out of the country. Investigative journalism is not being stimulated enough due to various reasons – from economic to political - neither by editors, nor by media owners.

Macedonian context abounds with topics that could and should be subject to investigative stories. Therefore, editors are encouraged to help journalists identify the topic, put it in a fine-tuned and attractive language, and bring the story to the end. Yet, the biggest problem is how to make the story cause results or change, which depends on the socio-political reality we live in. However, few of the stories that reached the contest showed that change can happen when powerful people will face corrupt practices made on their behalf or on behalf of the institution they manage.

The jury concluded that young journalists who persistently and consistently work on different stories and thereby demonstrate the courage to resist different centres of power, must be enthused. The Commission highlights the fact that most of received stories involve the very element in them - courage, referring to powerful people or institutions that seem unreachable or protected.

Finally, the jury concludes that contrary to the journalistic practice in other democratic countries, investigative stories in our country are rarely taken over from other media, and also, the investigation on an already disclosed topic is rarely sustained. This could reinforce the media pressure on institutions and would cause the desired changes. This depends a great deal on editorial policy and media owners

The jury concluded that most stories are quality made, address exceptionally important topics of public interest and cause a ripple effect in public, or change the existing situation. Thus, the jury decided to award the maximum number, i.e. three prizes. The winning story is awarded a prize of 4000 Euro, while second and third stories’ winners receive prizes of 3,000 Euro each. These are awards for the courage, determination and for the dedication of journalists investigators who dared to confront the institutions and the "untouchables". They are a tribute to the current work, but also an incentive for journalists to keep re-examining the performance of institutions and officials, thereby raising public awareness and accelerating democratic development of the society as a whole.

The jury decided on the basis of uniform criteria which apply to all countries of the Western Balkans and Turkey. Stories were appraised based on their relevance, quality, uniqueness, professional dedication and integrity of the journalist and based on its impact on public opinion.