

**Public petition addressed to the authorities in order to solve the problem of the access of journalists to information.**

**We demand that the mass media be given access to information of public interest.**

To Zinaida Greceanii, Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova

To Ion Chicu, Prime-Minister of the Republic of Moldova

In the context of the World Press Freedom Day, which is celebrated on 3 May, several media representatives, civil society members and media consumers submitted this public petition with the aim to flag up the problem journalists' restricted access journalists to information of public interest.

**The restricted access to information of public interest** is a huge problem for the journalists from the Republic of Moldova. Over the past years, the access to data held by the authorities was restricted under different pretexts – personal data protection, state and trade secrets; classifying requests for information as petitions; imposing on journalists the obligation to request information via letters instead of emails or telephone calls, etc. The current restrictive administrative practices are also due to the existing legal framework, which contains drawbacks that restrict the access of the media and implicitly, of the citizens, to information.

Over the past three years, the Independent Journalism Center, together with other civil society organisations have been working hard to **improve the legal framework that regulates this field**, including the Law on Access to Information. In July 2018, a draft law containing recommendations of media NGOs was registered in the Parliament, but it was never even discussed by the Parliament.

In the context of the state of emergency declared due to the COVID 19 pandemic, we express our concern regarding the fact that public authorities – under the pretext of the state of emergency – **allow for serious abuses and restrictions of the right to access to information**. Note that tripling the time for solving the requests to access public information, from legal point of view, is not just a disproportionate and unjustified measure, but it also encourages the dissemination of inaccurate and speculative information, which should be combated namely by the state authorities. Given the difficult situation our society faces, we need, more than ever, to give the public correct information quickly. The lack of information can lead to panic and result in people trusting public authorities less.

**Therefore, CONSIDERING** that:

- The access to public information is a fundamental right, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19), Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Article 10), as well as in the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova (Article 34);
- The right of access to information is guaranteed to all individuals and its restriction is inadmissible in a democratic society;
- The defining role of the media is to propagate the democracy in the society, while limiting the means of exercising the journalistic activity undoubtedly harms it.

**We ASK the Parliament and the Government of the Republic of Moldova:**

1. To repeal the legal provisions set up during the state of emergency, which restrict the access to public information;
2. To enforce legal provisions meant to improve the legal framework concerning the access to public information;
3. To stop and penalise the abusive administrative practices that restrict the access to public information.