

Information provided by the Croatian authorities regarding the alert submitted to the CoE's Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists

With reference to the alert of 11 March 2019 concerning the lawsuits against journalists in Croatia, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia would like to inform that it is still collecting all the relevant and exact data about ongoing lawsuits – under both Criminal Code and the Civil Code.

Regarding court cases under the Criminal Code, in the past four years, there were 220 lawsuits filed under the Criminal Code. So far, 188 court cases were concluded. Out of these 188, in 22 cases journalist or editors were found guilty while 168 court cases were closed either with dismissal or with the finding that the journalists or editors were found not guilty. The statistics provided by the Ministry of Justice contradict the claim in the alert that many cases were filed by politicians and public figures and include the offence of „shaming“.

On the contrary, following the data provided by the Ministry of Justice the majority of court cases is filed under the Civil Code where individuals are using their constitutional right to file court cases and ask for compensation. Following the initiative of the Council on Electronic Media, the Judicial Academy is organizing a workshop in May 2019 where legal and media legislation experts will analyse the situation based on precise data and statistics. Following the collection of this information, the Government will be able to make conclusions and eventually propose revision of the legislation if necessary.

In the meantime, Ministry of Culture would like to stress what it has publicly communicated several times about the HRT lawsuits during the past two months. The Government of Croatia was surprised by the lawsuits initiated by the HRT, and HRT was publicly invited to settle all disputes outside of the courts. Similar conclusion was adopted by the Parliamentary Committee for Media. As you know, the HRT is independent and the Government has no authority to interfere with their program or business decisions.

The Government of Croatia will continue with the efforts to secure and improve media legislation.