

## VII CONCLUSION

Economic and political pressure on journalists and media, the media renouncing critical and analytical reporting, an electoral process devoid of any mechanism to oversee political parties and candidates, supervision of broadcast media on the basis of the General Binding Instruction to broadcasters (radio and TV stations) in the election campaign, which was so unclear that the RBA had to release, on the eve of the second round, a binding explanation: all that paints a grim picture of the environment in which the media in Serbia operated in the period covered by this Report. Add to that the statements of the head of the same Government that adopted the Media Strategy less than a year ago, opting for the withdrawal of the state from the ownership in all media and for state aid control – the same prime minister who is now saying that all media in Serbia enjoy equal treatment, while only state-owned outlets receive interest-free loans (to solve their liquidity problems under the guise of “assistance for reporting about the election campaign”) – the picture appears even grimmer. In such circumstances, the verdict of the Appellate Court in Belgrade in the case of Dr. Slavka Durutovic-Gligorovic against B92 and reporter Sasa Lekovic – which has brought the practice of Serbian courts in media cases closer to the highest European standards established in some of the most important decisions of the European Court of Human Rights in the application of Article 10 of the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms – starts to look even more significant. If the practice in enforcing media regulations becomes the standard for Serbian courts, the media would have obtained a key ally in their struggle for a more open and democratic society. The Appellate Court’s decision sticks out even more from the above-described environment if we compare it to the decision, or rather the lack thereof, of the Press Council’s Commission for Complaints – as the self-regulatory body, expected by the media community to contribute to the furthering of the highest freedom of expression standards – in the case of the Regional Minority Center against the daily “Politika” over a text boosting prejudice against an entire ethnic group, accusing it of enjoying preferential treatment by the Serbian courts compared to other citizens.