

III MONITORING OF THE PROCESS OF ADOPTION OF NEW LAWS

In the period covered by this Report, no laws of direct relevance for the media have been adopted. However, the Culture and Media Minister Bratislav Petkovic said in an interview for RTS on October 5 that the Government was committed to implementing the Media Strategy and announced that five new laws to be adopted: the Public Information Law, the Law on Electronic Media, the Law on Public Service Broadcasting, the Law on Unlawful Concentration of Media Ownership and the Law on Accreditation of Foreign Correspondents. "A team of people that has already been involved in such laws is preparing the aforementioned legislation: professors Rade Veljanovski, Vladimir Vodinelic and Miroљjub Radojkovic and Assistant Professor Dejan Milenkovic. The legislation will be tabled for public debate, after which they will be debated at the Government session and in the Parliament", Petkovic said. He denied the rumors that one of the media laws was being developed by an informal group in the President's cabinet.

We remind that the drafts of four of the aforementioned laws were finished near the end of the previous government's term of office. The Draft Law on Electronic Media, which was prepared by the working group operating with the support of the OSCE, was presented to the public by the then State Secretary for the Media.. The Draft Law on Unlawful Concentration of Media Ownership underwent public discussion back in 2008 without, however, ever being debated in the Parliament, with the biggest opponents of its adoption being the largest press publishers. Off the record, one may learn that the task of the working group, whose members were mentioned by the Minister in his interview for RTS, is to harmonize the aforementioned draft laws. Although the Minister confirmed that the Government was committed to implementing the Media Strategy, it has been reiterated several times that the Strategy's most controversial part – the establishment of several regional PSB – will be abandoned. All that also coincides with the requests from the European Commission, which said in its latest progress report about Serbia dated October 10, that it was necessary to ensure the transparency of media ownership. Among other things, the EC called for speeding up of the implementation of the Media Strategy. "It is necessary to ensure complete transparency of the ownership structure of the media and speed up implementation of the Media Strategy", the EC report said. "Measures concerning the financing of certain media from the state budget must be aligned with EU regulations for the constitute state aid". The report also reminded that Serbia undertook to align state aid control regulations with EU regulations as of January 1, 2012.