

VII CONCLUSION

According to the statistics presented by the Serbian Deputy Prime Minister and Internal Affairs Minister Ivica Dacic at a meeting with the representatives of the OSCE, SEEMO and IMI in early December 2009, the number of attacks against journalist in Serbia in 2009 was halved compared to 2008, when there were 138 such attacks. Unfortunately, these statistics were spoiled by a new wave of attacks against B92 and its reporter Brankica Stankovic over a new series of the investigative program "Insider", dealing with the leaders of extreme supporters and right wing groups. Compared to the situation in 2008 and the mass protests over the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo (UDI), the arrest of Radovan Karadzic and the many attacks on reporters during these protests, the statistics, presented by the Minister, sound encouraging. However, we are of the opinion that this is rather the result of a set of circumstances than of a more friendly media environment in 2008. The attacks against Brankica Stankovic have shown that in the public discourse of Serbia there remain themes and social problems that are risky to tackle and report. Furthermore, the fact that certain media joined the attacks against B92, accusing the station of waging a campaign against sports in general, point to a lack of elementary solidarity in the journalist profession. What is commendable is the decisive reaction of the highest state officials who publicly supported Stankovic. B92's Insider has also directly contributed to the passing of urgent amendments to criminal legislation. However, although several attackers have been arrested, it seems that the chief perpetrators remain untouchable.

Contrary to the presented statistics, 2009 will be remembered for the restrictive Law on Public Information that was passed and the Amendments to the Broadcasting Law, which have increased the Government's influence of on the composition of the independent regulatory body; the further obstruction of the privatization of local and regional public media; the delay of the implementation of the Digitalization Strategy; as well as the ineffective measures of the Government for helping the media in crisis. At the same time, even the positive examples of government attitude towards the media, such as the amendments to the Criminal Code, which have introduced more stringent sanctions for attacks against journalists, were merely isolated cases and not part of a wider strategy to improve the legal framework and the media environment. The pending media strategy and the announced intensive efforts to further harmonize regulations with European standards and laws have remained only a promise. The entire 2009 year was marked by a continued economic decline of the media and reluctance of the Government to seriously and responsibly tackle the many problems in this sector. This has ultimately had a devastating effect on media pluralism and the role of media in a democratic society.