

VII CONCLUSION

In 2010, the media scene in Serbia is still facing the same challenges as in the previous period. The number of problem is increasing with no possible solutions in sight. The Government has continued to ignore even those obligations it has imposed to itself – for example in the action plan adopted together with the Digitalization Strategy. Meanwhile, the politicians believe that the key problem is the irresponsible reporting of certain media. On the other hand, they think that the positive outcomes are those that are the result of the passing of legislation that, in the opinion of the media, are breaching rights and freedoms provided for by the Constitution and ratified international acts. This report has quoted statement made by Culture Minister Nebojsa Bradic, who said that the biggest problem in the media sector was the absence or deficit of responsibility towards the public and for claims made in the public realm. Mr. Bradic also said that the amended Law on Public Information, which is conducive to the regulation of the media sphere, confirms that fact. Such an approach results in the Government being the one that is pointing to negative phenomena instead of journalists' associations and – in the most drastic cases – the courts. At the same time, nobody is doing the work of the Government, namely ensuring a more favorable environment for the media, which would enable them to fulfill their basic function in a democratic society. Instead of recognizing the function of the media as carriers of information and ideas on political and other issues of public interest and a means of informing the citizens about these ideas and positions, the media are treated as a sector whose only need is to be muzzled and nothing else. The same may be observed in other sectors – from the regulatory sector to resolving the issue of privatization of local and regional public media. Almost eight years after the passing of the law making the privatization of local and regional media mandatory, this task remains not only unfinished, but is being reassessed in an utterly irresponsible manner. The Privatization Agency was left to deal on its own with the problems caused by unsuccessful privatizations, which means it must simultaneously engage in entering into new privatization agreements and in terminating old contracts.

At the same time, the cases where the new owners of the media have failed to pay their dues to the state in the privatization process are highlighted, while the problem of unpaid dues to the employees, who are owed salaries and benefits, is neglected. The issue of non-compliance with professional standards is particularly being neglected. In this case we are once again facing the perception according to which the media are seen as an industry with primary function to replenish the state budget and not to inform the citizens about issues they are entitled to be aware of.