

VII CONCLUSION

With the appointment of Gordana Susa after more than a year, the RBA Council is now complete. Furthermore, the study funded by the European Commission and the analysis of the media market in Serbia should enable further activities on the media strategy. Finally, empowered by last year's amendments to the Criminal Code, the courts are more stringent in cases of threats and attacks against journalists. In light of these encouraging examples, one might conclude that Serbia has taken a good direction in finding solutions for the many problems faced by the media. On the other hand, however, there are not so encouraging developments and case of obstruction of reform attempts, including the amendments to tax legislation that have dramatically increased the price of foreign television content, as well as the serious delay in the discharge of obligations under the Action Plan accompanying the Strategy of the Transition from Analog to Digital Television and Radio Broadcasting. Moreover, the problems that will arise due to the delay and avoidance of the privatization of public media, which media associations have been pointing to for years, have been fully exposed in the period covered by this Monitoring Report. The lack of any mechanisms of systemic protection of public media, financed from the budget, from external pressure on their editorial policy by their formal founders – national minorities' national councils as in the case of the "Magyar so" daily, or local authorities, as in the case of SRIF from Bor – has once again confirmed the urgent need to complete the privatization of public media. At that, the examples of failed privatizations may not be an excuse to give up the privatization process as a whole, since society simply has no mechanisms to prevent taxpayers' money from being misused for the promotion of political parties and leaders, at the detriment of the public interest. As long as the Government keeps changing the focus of its new media policy agenda according to its own political needs or the need to make big capital happy, the media in Serbia cannot hope for a meaningful recovery. The statements made by the Minister of Culture have only confirmed that the Government is acting precisely as described above. While the Minister was saying last month that the most pressing problem in the media sector was the lack of accountability towards the public and the public word and that the Law on Public Information was encouraging for the organization of the media scene, this month Mr. Bradic tried to play the intermediary in the row between domestic tycoons and the German WAZ-Mediengruppe, shifting the focus to the matter of vertical concentration, namely the situation in which the publishers of daily newspapers are at the same time the owners of distribution networks. All indications are that in the coming months, the Serbian authorities will focus on some new topic and that no progress whatsoever will be made with regard to accountability for the public word or in stopping further horizontal or vertical concentration.