

VII CONCLUSION

In our earlier reports, we wrote about how the new government, which was finally elected on July 27, faced a serious task in the media field. It will have to work simultaneously on the reform of the regulatory framework, the withdrawal of the state from the media, the redefining of public service broadcasters, the control of state aid and combating monopolies on the media market and related markets (such as the advertising market and media content distribution market). An ongoing concern, however, is the fact that the leaders of the new parliamentary majority continue to send contradictory and unclear messages about their intentions in that domain. Thus, for example, after Aleksandar Vucic said last month that the media sector would be completely deregulated, he (who was elected first Deputy Prime Minister in the meantime, in charge of defense, security and the fight against corruption and crime and Defense Minister) announced an investigation over the purchase and sale of 50% of the stake in "Politika". Vucic accused the private company "Farmakom" of having acquired a share in "Politika", "under direct orders of the leaders of the Democratic Party". Vucic also claims that Farmakom owes almost 400 million Euros to the banks (the media reported that the 50% stake in "Politika" was bought for 4.7 million Euros) and that it received loans from DS-controlled banks. It remains unclear, however, what the new government intends to investigate and endorse. If it plans to promote the setting up of mechanisms that would guarantee more transparent media ownership, it definitely deserves support. If it is intent on promoting tighter independent control of the banking sector and releasing the same from the grip of politics that have led to awarding poorly secured loans to over-indebted media companies close to the government (allowing the politicians to control more easily the editorial policy of such media), it should be backed wholeheartedly. However, if the whole problem is solely in the new government's reluctance to part with the control mechanisms it expected to have over certain media, the sincerity of its aim to reform the media sector (in a manner that would guarantee pluralism and media freedoms) should be rightfully questioned. Due to the incapacity of all governments since the democratic changes of 2000 to properly reform the media landscape in Serbia, the situation in the last few years stagnated, or even deteriorated.