

### III MONITORING OF THE PROCESS OF ADOPTION OF NEW LAWS

In the period covered by this Report, the Parliament did not adopt any legislation of direct relevance for the media sector. The Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Personal Data Protection was tabled to Parliament, but the proposed amendments concern only facilitating the utilization of data for humanitarian purposes. The Parliament is yet to debate any of the drafts of the set of media laws prepared in the last months of the previous government's term of office. The new government has not even initiated a public debate about these drafts.

However, the media continued to speculate as to how certain issues relevant for the media sector will be addressed. For example, the daily "Blic" cited sources within the Government and the working group (referring probably to the working group of the Ministry of Finance dealing with the revoking of "non-tax and parafiscal charges", as one of the electoral promises of certain parties of the ruling coalition) and reported that the Serbian Government would probably scrap the TV subscription fee for RTS. The daily "Novosti", citing the Ministry of Finance, wrote something completely different: they claim that the revocation of the TV subscription fee was never discussed, since they have not even considered the fee a parafiscal charge and hence it may not be on the list of 107 parafiscal charges to be revoked in October. "Novosti" went on saying that merely 36% of households paid the RTS fee and that the collection rate was the highest in Novi Sad and Belgrade (about 60%), while it was about 20% in other parts of Serbia. Furthermore, the daily went on saying that RTS needed at least 90 million Euros per year to operate, in the situation where it managed to collect merely about 20 million from advertising. This means that the state would have to earmark the remaining 70 million from the already empty budget. Evidence of the low level of that debate is the fact that "Blic" failed to explain how the Government could revoke the fee in the first place, since the latter was not introduced by a Government decision, but by the Broadcasting Law. Similarly, "Novosti" stopped short of elaborating on the methodology of how they came to the conclusion that no less than 90 million Euros were needed annually to finance the RTS, namely if that number included the savings that could be made by having a more clear definition of the requirements the public service broadcasters had to fulfill, as well as by rationalizing the operations of the RTS and effectively controlling its finances. The same speculations emerged as to the issue of regional public service broadcasters. "Blic" wrote about the so-called "Kragujevac Initiative" as the "initiative for the salvation of local media", while "Politika" also reported from the "Kragujevac Initiative" round table in Pancevo, where the representatives of public companies from Novi Pazar, Kragujevac, Nis and Pancevo pushed for the adoption of a law that would enable the formation of regional

public service broadcasters. The “Kragujevac Initiative” also pointed to the fact that the draft law produced by the working group of the Ministry of Culture, which is yet to be formally released, provided for as much as an extra five public service broadcasters (on top of the RTS), which would all be located in Central Serbia, while the only one left in Vojvodina would be RTV in Novi Sad, although the “Kragujevac Initiative” had advocated for an additional three public service broadcasters in the province. There were no analyses, however, as to whether the formation of regional public service broadcasters would be a measure that would really guarantee the survival of local media, as claimed by the “Kragujevac Initiative”, or rather a death sentence for most local media, especially the commercial ones, while enabling a few chosen state-owned media to survive.