

VII CONCLUSION

Opening the regional conference of media freedoms in Southeast Europe held in Belgrade, the Culture Minister Bratislav Petkovic said that the new government, in its first 40 days in office, had found a media landscape in disarray, where the real owners of certain media remained unknown, a public service broadcaster in crisis, legislative projects unfinished and state ownership in the media unclear. The right question to ask, however, is what the media landscape will look like after the term of office of the current government. Its first moves in this area are not encouraging. Lack of transparency, informal working groups, statements showing that the new government is yet to recognize the complexity and all the aspects of the problems faced by the media sector – these are all a cause of concern. Meanwhile, the public service broadcaster (PSB) could barely collect 30% of the TV subscription fee; another 35 broadcasters will see their licenses revoked for failing to generate the revenues necessary to be able to pay their dues to the competent regulator. Unfortunately, there will be no progress in this domain until the new government recognizes the other side of the issue of sustainable and stable financing of the PSBs, namely the responsible expenditure of money for clearly defined functions of the PSBs, as well as that the unregulated media landscape will not be regulated merely by passing regulations no matter how good the latter are. The unregulated media landscape may be regulated only if there is political will to implement the mechanisms that will, on one hand, prevent abuse of political power and public revenues for influencing the editorial policy of the media and on the other, to prevent cartel-like agreements and abuse of dominant advertising market position in order, again, to influence editorial policy. In the contrary case, some future minister that will succeed Petkovic will only be able to lament on the “difficult burden” and “skeletons in the closets” left by previous government.