

VII CONCLUSION

For many years already the summer was the season that has traditionally seen media laws being amended without public discussion, the end result being restricted freedom of speech and stronger mechanisms for media control by the executive branch and various centres of political or financial power. The most drastic example was the Amendments to the Law on Public Information from 2009, which were subsequently branded unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. These amendments provoked the reaction of media professionals, which ultimately led to the adoption of the Media Strategy and revived the discussion about the necessity of media reforms. Unfortunately, while anti-reformist amendments to media laws in the previous decade were legion, the implementation of the Media Strategy is unacceptably slow. While it has passed the first phase, the Law on Public Information and Media is yet to be tabled to Parliament for approval. The Law on Electronic Media and the Law on PSB's didn't even come to the public debate phase. It seems that this summer would have elapsed without an anti-reform incident, had it not been for the open competition on the issuance of licenses for a new commercial national station. Although, at first sight, it may seem that everything is happening in accordance with the Law and that the competent authorities are merely implementing the proper statutory procedure, it's clear that the tender has completely blocked the digitalization process, especially since the competent authorities will not know which frequencies they have at their disposal until the completion of the tender. In the meantime, professional standards continue to be degraded, as evidenced by the outrageous campaigns in the tabloid newspapers and on certain commercial stations, such as the attacks against Veran Matic, the Editor-in-Chief of TV B92 in "Informer" or Veselin Simonovic, the Editor-in-Chief of "Blic" on TV Pink, not the least because Matic is one of the founders of ANEM, while Simonovic was until recently the President of the Management Board of the Media Association – two professional associations that have led the way in fighting for media reforms and the implementation of the Media Strategy. Meanwhile, decisions by certain courts of law continue to surprise. After drawing praises several times in our reports for improving the case law in media cases, the Appellate Court in Novi Sad passed two verdicts that might lead to the closure of two media outlets in Apatin, although the court of first instance, the Higher Court in Sombor, as well as the Press Council, found the actions of that media outlet, in the case described earlier in this Report, to have been completely in accordance with the Law and the Code of Ethics.