

## **VI THE PRIVATIZATION PROCESS**

There was no progress in October concerning the privatization of state-owned media. Although the public debate on the Draft Law on Public Information and Media, which once again confirmed, at least declaratively, the commitment of the state to enforce privatization, ended last spring, that Law is yet to enter parliamentary procedure. October saw the public debate on the Draft Law on Electronic Media and the Draft Law on PSB's. However, that debate was again misused for questioning privatization and claiming that the sole remedy for the troubled Serbian media landscape – and particularly local and regional media - is state ownership. Just like last spring, the concept of privatization is under attack from the centers of political power unwilling to relinquish public media through which they influenced public opinion, as well as part of the employees in public media, concerned for their jobs. Meanwhile, the state offered neither social programs nor incentives to private media for employing new people and hence the fear of public media employees for their job is not without foundation. On the other hand, delaying privatization and continuing with opaque budget financing of public media is pushing these same media to the brink of collapse. At the same time, such an outcome would further increase the likelihood of Serbia ultimately remaining without any local and regional media.