

B. SERBIAN MEDIA SCENE IN MAY 2014

VII CONCLUSION

The impression about the situation in May resembled that of the first four months of the year. Attacks on journalists and their property continued, without the perpetrators being identified. Editors are being dismissed, for what many believe to be political reasons. The mere perception of dismissals, pressure and even arrests for allegedly spreading panic during the disastrous floods, as being politically motivated, results (regardless of whether it is accurate or not) in a rise of self-censorship in the media, drawing us into a vicious circle with no end in sight. The seriousness of the situation is reflected in the Annual Report of the Ombudsman for 2013, as well as the 2013 Progress Report of the European Commission and the press release by OSCE Freedom of Media representative Dunja Mijatovic from May 27. The very vocal critics of that press release in Serbia have disregarded the obvious: even had there not been censorship and pressure, there is plenty of fertile ground for self-censorship, which is far more difficult to tackle. The fact that the new media laws still aren't adopted after all the work that's being done to draft them, makes the situation even worse. Add to that the increasing number of complaints submitted by journalists and media to the Commissioner for Free Access to Information of Public Importance, caused, among other factors, by the unwillingness of public authorities to allow free access to information and there are very few encouraging accomplishments. One of these is perhaps the extension of the initial network for the broadcasting of the digital television signal, which actually covers 90% of the Serbian population. This could mean that the (at least technical) preconditions for a successful switchover are there. What remains a key precondition for successfully going forward is the definitive adoption of a set of new media laws, which have been in the pipeline since the adoption of the Media Strategy in 2011.