

VII CONCLUSION

As soon as the reshuffle of the Serbian Government – which took place on March 14 – was announced, all activities on issues relevant for the media scene in Serbia came to a halt, including the work on the Media Strategy. Somewhat unexpectedly, the reshuffle led to the merger of two ministries with competences in that sector – the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Society. One may reasonably expect that this will resolve at least part of the problem caused by often uncoordinated activities of the two ministries. The new Minister Predrag Markovic himself has promptly announced that “journalists’ and media associations will be invited for discussions about the continuation of the work on the Media Strategy”, as well as that the state secretary will be appointed, to be in charge of the media within the Ministry. This is definitely a good sign. Since the problems were unfortunately not only of a technical nature, it remains to be seen if Prime Minister Cvetkovic’s reshuffled cabinet will have the political will to properly address the problems that journalists’ and media associations have been pointing to for years. At the same time, Serbia has probably embarked on an election year, which means that in such an environment, political parties will probably be reluctant to give up their mechanisms of influence and pressure on the media. A negative sign but also an indicator that shows the degree of mutual distrust inside the ruling coalition – which the media associations will have to fight against in order to have a successful reform of the media scene – are the controversial amendments of the Law on the Government, which restrict not only the freedom of ministers to communicate with the media, but also the right of the public to be fully informed about the activities of the highest authorities, including information about disagreements within the Government.