

## VI THE PRIVATIZATION PROCESS

After the adoption of the Media Strategy, the withdrawal of the state from media ownership was again postponed indefinitely, namely by 24 months after determining the legal grounds. It remains unknown, however, what “determining the legal grounds” means. In the meantime, in a time when everyone expects the parliamentary and local elections to be called, the pressure on local, commercial and even state media is on the rise. Furthermore, the state is not doing anything to solve the problems of the media that were again nationalized after failed privatizations. For example, the local television “Valjevo” ceased broadcasting in the cable networks after its equipment was seized by the court over employee claims for unpaid salaries. The media reported that TV Valjevo’s signal disappeared after three cameramen and editors seized the remaining equipment “hoping they will sell it and thereby settle the debt”. The salaries in TV Valjevo remain unpaid as of March 2010, when the station was acquired on a repeated auction by Slobodan Pavlovic from the village of Urovci near Obrenovac, for the sum of 147.000 dinars. The Privatization Agency terminated the contract with Pavlovic back on March 28, 2011, due to non-compliance and in May last year, mechanical engineer Branko Trifunovic from Arandjelovac was appointed as temporary representative of capital. The local self-government was reluctant to bring back TV Valjevo, which has not aired news program since January 20, 2011, to budget financing, due to the debts amounting to more than six million dinars last summer, while, in the meantime, intending to take Pavlovic to court for unpaid lease of the premises, unpaid electricity, water and other utilities bills. Anyhow, problems similar to those in TV Valjevo may be observed in other municipalities too. Local governments cannot afford to revitalize over-indebted media, while giving scarce resources at the expense of local private media, which could be competitive enough to survive on the market. At the same time, there are no investors for a business that is currently unprofitable, while the state cannot seem to produce a plan that would clearly state if Serbia can afford to finance small local television stations. Not even the concept stipulated in the Media Strategy, involving the setting up of a number of regional public service broadcasters, is not a clear enough of a message: the Strategy did not point to any concrete media, leaving many in the hope that, with strong enough lobbying and political connections, they could ultimately come in the position to be one of these potential regional public service broadcasters, which would perhaps be able to survive.