

Intellectual Property Office:

Third departure in three years due to pressure

That the Intellectual Property Office is being held hostage by lobbies is evidenced by the constant changes in its leadership. The term of office of the Director of the Office is five years, during which time three persons have already held the position of Director.

Now Vesna Stanković Juričić is leaving as well.

POLITICS

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Director of the Intellectual Property Office Vesna Stankovic Juricic at Friday's round table of the Slovenian Press Agency on the amendment to the Copyright and Related Rights Act (Photo: STA)

According to our information, the director of the Intellectual Property Office (UIL) **Vesna Stanković Juričić**, who participated in the round table of the Slovenian Press Agency on the amendment to the Copyright and Related Rights Act (hereinafter the amendment to the Act), will terminate her employment as Director of the Office. This would mean that Stanković Juričić is leaving the office only one year after she took office for a term of five years, at a time when the draft amendment is in public discussion.

A turbulent period during the time of director Jurij Žurej

According to unofficial information, Vesna Stanković Juričić decided to leave due to the pressures triggered by the announced changes to the Copyright and Related Rights Act, especially in the part related to the operation of collective copyright management organizations. As previously reported, some representatives of collective organizations have already lobbied in the National Assembly and at the Ministry of the Economy, which is also the official proposer of the amendment.

It is known that after the announced changes to the law, the Intellectual Property Office would be given greater powers and thus a greater set of measures against those who violate the law, and in addition, the internal control of collecting societies would increase. At the same time, it should not be overlooked that the office led by Stanković Juričić, who is also a member of the board of the Securities Market Agency, initiated more than 70 supervisory proceedings against collective organizations.



The office is not run by the profession, but by lobbies and interest groups. On average, directors of patent and similar offices abroad have held their positions for 20 years or more, says Jurij Žurej, a former director of the office.

"This office is not run by the profession, but by lobbies and interest groups. On average, directors of patent and similar offices abroad have been in their positions for 20 years or more," says **Jurij Žurej**, when asked why there are constant departures from the director's position. When he assumed the leadership during Pahor's government a turbulent period followed. Because Žurej was shadowed and subjected to covert surveillance, the parliamentary commission for the control of intelligence and security services discussed this. During the same period, the Sazas assembly demanded Žurej's immediate resignation, and in April 2012 the president of the Slovenian Union of Musicians, Zoran Predin, sent an open letter to the then Minister of Economy Radovan Žerjav, explaining why Žurej could not be the director of the office. A month later, the Ministry of the Economy handed Žurej a decision on the extraordinary termination of the employment contract, and the second Janša government appointed **Luka Novak** in his place.

Office as a hostage to copyright law

But Novak's five-year tenure at the helm of the Office also came to an end after less than a year. Unofficially, at the time, the Minister of Economic Affairs, Stank Stepišnik, was reportedly under pressure from various lobbies over the announced amendments to the Copyright and Related Rights Act. It should be recalled that before his dismissal, Novak had to prematurely terminate a meeting with music and audiovisual creators because of "raised voices and pounding on the table", as the media reported at the time.



Luka Novak whose five-year tenure came to an end after less than a year.

Novak says the Office has no problem with professionalism, but the problem comes when it becomes hostage to copyright law.

"*Nobody is interested in patents and trademarks,*" adds the former director of the office. There are several lobbies pressuring the Office's work, he says: two are powerful in the field of collective copyright management organisations, the business lobby is influential....

"*Some directors are put in place to serve certain lobbies. The lobbies, of course, work to ensure that the management of the collective organisations get as much as possible. And because these lobbies put pressure on each political party, which knows little or nothing about intellectual property, they are subject to this kind of personnel recruitment,*" Novak points out.

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