How do you get a job at the University of Belgrade? Do you need personal and professional connections, or do you have to be a member of a political party? Some of the answers are offered in a report on corruption in higher education in Serbia published by the Media Diversity Institute Western Balkans and its partners. The report produced after 6 months of research focused on university professors and experts’ perception on the level of corruption at the University of Belgrade.

The report and a debate that has followed are part of the project "Towards more transparent higher education" aiming to examine the role of Serbian political parties in employment of lecturers and their assistants at universities in Serbia.

“Response rate was very low amongst professors, University and Ministry of Education which shows the attitude they have towards initiatives dealing with issues such as corruption, nepotism and involvement of political parties in the process of employment at universities,” said MDI WB Director Ivana Jelaca at the debate held in Belgrade.
The research has shown that employment helped by connections in political parties is not a dominant issue, although it is not completely unknown in the higher education in Serbia. Cronyism and different friendships or professional ties are more present than political parties’ influence in both success of studies and employment.

The research has also found that there is a potential for different forms of corruption that could influence quality of academic staff and quality of education and research at the University of Belgrade.

Some of the main findings:
- There are formal procedures to regulate employment at universities, but according to interviewees there are ways to formally fulfil criteria while not choosing the best candidate.
- The role of academic council is often passive. Many interviewees have testified the existence of policy of not interfering in the decisions of colleagues, which diminishes the importance of mutual monitoring of academic staff.
- Universities in Serbia are obliged by the law to have Integrity plans but many of them do not have them or if they do, they do not recognise potential for corruption in employment process.