CHALLENGES IN THE SERBIAN TEXTBOOK MARKET
SCHOOL SYSTEM

• One year of preschool is obligatory (age 6 to 7)
• In primary school (which is obligatory) there are 8 grades (age 7 to 15).
• In the first four grades there is one teacher per class for the whole 4 years; in higher grades there are teachers for each subject.
NUMBER OF SCHOOLS AND PUPILS

• Today in Serbia there are 1250 primary schools, 450 secondary schools, 850,000 pupils enrolled in primary and secondary schools, 70,000 pupils per grade.

• With around 3% of the annual budget given for education Serbia is much lower than the UNESCO proclaimed rate of 6% necessary for successful development. Almost all of that money goes toward teachers’ salaries and therefore there are no reforms or serious investments in educational infrastructure (modernization of schools, IT in schools, digitalization, etc.). Despite that, the teachers are not paid enough according to the importance of their job.
NUMBER OF PUBLISHERS

- **Total number** of textbook publishers in Serbia with published titles: 49
- Number of textbook publishers with more than 10 titles published: 21
- Number of textbook publishers with more than 50 titles published: 7
MARKET IN TOTAL

• In 2013, all textbook publishers made 31 million EUR in total.
• The state-owned publisher (Zavod za udzbenike) is still the leader with the number of titles and almost 6 million EUR annual incomes, although their position is weaker year by year.
• The ten biggest textbook publishers made 80% of total sales on the market.
TEXTBOOK APPROVAL SYSTEM

• Publishers needs to be licensed by the Ministry of Education.
• There is an approval system and every textbook needs to have official approval before going into schools.
WHO PAYS FOR THE TEXTBOOKS

• Until 2010 parents had paid for the textbooks. From then the Ministry started the project “Textbooks for free”, covering the first four grades of primary school.

• After the first four years it has become clear that there is not enough money in the budget to carry on with it, so they decided to modify it and to pay for the textbooks only for pupils from families with bad financial situation.
KREATIVNI CENTAR’S TEXTBOOK PRODUCTION

• Kreativni centar has 150 textbook titles in Serbian and around 50 titles in minority languages.
• In preschool and the first four grades of primary school we have covered all obligatory subjects and some elective subjects as well.
• In the higher grades of primary school we cover around half of all subjects.
OUR POSITION ON THE MARKET

• Kreativni centar started with textbook production from the year 2004, after the Ministry of education decided to open the textbook market for private publishers.

• Through all these years KC has maintained its position among the first three most successful textbook publishers in Serbia.
HOW WE GREW

- Because of the demands of making textbooks KC doubled the number of its employees – editors, designers, proofreaders, and immensely expanded the number of external collaborators of all kinds.

- That created a need to change the structure of the company, the management organization, rights policy, marketing and publishing plans within the company.

- In short, that changed the profile of KC as a publishing house, which started as a children’s books publisher but also developed a textbook production of its own.
Our membership in the EEPG, which started in 2005, was a constant support for us and a valuable resource of different European experiences in textbook production, which helped us in a number of situations regarding the problems in our country.
A LAW ON TEXTBOOKS

• From 2009 the textbook market is regulated by the Law on Textbooks.

• Last year the Ministry of education decided to change it and those preparations are still in progress. Unfortunately, many of the solutions in the new version of the Law are very bad for publishers and will bring them uncertain future on the market. To mention a few:
Every four years the Ministry issues the Catalogue of textbooks mandatory for school use. The Catalogue includes only approved textbooks chosen by the schools attended by at least 15% pupils of a certain generation. It is important to know that 15% means 10,000 students per textbook, which is too high, especially for new textbooks.

Publishers within the Catalogue have an obligation to prepare special versions of their textbooks for minorities (8 different languages) and special versions for disabled children in just 30 days (!?)

In case the Ministry introduces new curriculum the deadlines for preparing new textbooks are extremely short (120 days or even 60 days)
○ The Ministry announces the public call for the submission of requests for the approval of textbooks every four years. So far the approval of textbooks has been continuous. A publisher submits its textbook when it has finished its work on it.

○ At the proposal of the Commission for determining the maximum retail price of a textbook, the Ministry makes the decision on the maximum price of a textbook every year. Etc.

○ Ministry determines the recommended number of pages that every textbook can contain.
- **A teacher is in breach of duty if he/she demands that the pupils should buy any additional material.**
  This regulation denies a teacher the right to decide about the teaching materials he/she will use in his/her work.

- **Every textbook must have a compulsory electronic addition.**
  Schools lack information technology equipment, and because of that there are not many electronic materials on the market at the moment. It is not clear for what kind of device is this addition, for which purpose etc.
IMPORTANT QUESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW:

1. How to resist the growing pressure from politicians, because they see educational policy as a strong issue for a great number of people and connect that to the elections?

2. How can publishers change the “greedy, profit oriented” image which is created by the media among the public?

3. How to change the attitude in the public opinion that everything that publishers are making for educational purposes should be free of charge?

4. How to prevent the results of your hard work with all kinds of authors for a decade or even more being simply taken away by the educational authorities under the excuse of “higher public interest”?
Thank you