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Will the political crisis in Montenegro impede its progress towards the EU?

Interview

Milivoje Katnić,
Chief Special prosecutor

Challenges in the EU

Small concessions, big symbolism

Foreword: **Politics and the Rule of Law**

Boris Marić

We do not need to be shoemakers to know if our shoes fit, wrote Hegel, just like we don't have to be professionals to acquire knowledge of matters of universal interest.

Knowing the public interest and insisting on it, in fact, is the core of the fight for a democratic and civil society. Montenegro today is a battlefield for democratic progress.

The fight against high-level corruption and organized crime is under way, but still with uncertain outcomes. The Chief Special Prosecutor has pushed against the boundaries chronic failures of the State Prosecutor's Office, moving it to a level that threatens and frightens many holders of political and financial power, still certain of their imperviousness. The executive has its own trump cards to slow down the prosecutor's enthusiasm.

Were the prosecutor guided by administrative logic, sticking to the principle of least resistance, he could have sought the solution in a handful of formal arguments. First of all, everything is according to the law. Second, by insisting on its own appointment for the head of the police unit, the executive absolves the prosecutor in advance of all responsibility for a potential failure. Instead, the Chief Special Prosecutor fought publicly and to the end for his right to create an adequate working environment for himself. With this he opened up two heavy, leaden gates. One that could lead to the establishment of core capacities of the Special Prosecutor's Office and lay systematic foundations for the fight against high-level corruption and organized crime. Another, the road more often taken in societies of "captured" institutions that would only chalk up another victory for an entrenched team of bureaucrats, politicians and interests of 'strategic investors'.

One does not have to be an expert to recognize how intertwined processes of political crisis, fight for the rule of law and negotiations between Montenegro and the EU are.

Calendar

- 1 January **The Netherlands takes over the presidency of the EU** / The EU presidency passed on from Luxembourg to the Netherlands, to be passed on again on 1 July 2016 to Slovakia. This will be the twelfth Dutch presidency of the Union.
- 11 January **Unemployment in EU at the lowest level for the past four years** / According to Eurostat, in January 2016 the EU unemployment rate hit 10.5% - the lowest since October 2011. The member state with the lowest unemployment is Germany.
- 18 January **Austria temporarily suspends Schengen** / Due to the ever-increasing number of migrants, Austria will temporarily suspend the Schengen agreement and establish full control of its borders. Migrants who do not meet the criteria for asylum will be deported.
- 27 January **Vote of confidence for the Government** / 42 MPs of DPS, Positive Montenegro and minority parties joined in the vote of confidence for the government, which was challenged by 20 MPs of SDP and opposition parties.
- 27 January **Improving perception of corruption** / In the new ranking of the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index Montenegro came 61st out of 168 countries, with a corruption perception index of 44. This is an improvement compared to the previous year, when Montenegro ranked 76th.
- 29 January **Dialogue on exit from the political crisis** / Spokesperson of the European Commission, **Maja Kocijančić** expressed expectation that Montenegro will find a solution to the current political stalemate in order to make further progress in the implementation of reforms necessary for the process of European integration.

The Balkanisation of Europe



By: Denis MacShane

*The author is a former UK
Minister of Europe*

The Balkans is Europe's Zombie Zone, where the dead matter more than the living, where past feuds count for more than finding solutions based on compromise and where religion and churches still have political influence in a way unknown north of the Alps since the 1950s.

From the Aegean and Adriatic to the Alps, the region is full of unhappy nations with bad economics in competition with worse politics. Slovenia is busy putting up razor wire barriers on its borders with fellow EU member state Croatia. Bosnia-Herzegovina remains unable to work as a single state. Serbia still is infected by the cancer of supremacism, egged on by Vladimir Putin, who loves the idea of keeping the Balkans as a problem region that his rivals in Washington and Brussels cannot solve.

Albania has yet to escape the deep corruption and criminalities of its first post-Communist decade. While the younger, more progressive leadership of Edi Rama makes its mark with European counterparts, the old trades of smuggling cigarettes, people, arms and prostitutes die hard.

Kosovo remains a nation without full status, as Greece and Serbia place every obstacle in the path of the young Kosovan state from getting full diplomatic recognition at the UN, or even the Council of Europe, where the norms and values of the European Convention on Human Rights, and the court that enforces them, are more than ever needed.

The only bright news is that Macedonia may be willing to talk to Athens about the name dispute. The claim the Slav Macedonians are the same as the Hellenic people who defended the peninsula against Persians is of course absurd, but there are plenty of countries around the world that call themselves the 'United States' but are not America. No-one outside of Greece thinks for a moment that the Skopje republic calling itself Macedonia is any threat to the Macedonia of Thessalonika and northern Greece. But how to explain this to Greece, with its contested leftist government and its crushing debt burden left over from the corrupt clientalist politics that were

never cleaned up before the emotional decision to allow Greece to enter the European Community without meeting any of the criteria, except of having removed the colonels forty years ago.

The EU has every reason to direct its policy at the region, but this is no easy job. And it is getting more difficult now that the region had become a route for thousands of people fleeing violence and revolt against dictatorship in Syria and Iraq. When a state, even a tyrannical one, disappears, the gates to hell are opened as law, police, frontiers, and market economics disappear into a maelstrom of violence of all against all. The Libyan coastline now is the 1000 km launch pad for every African and Arab asylum seeker who can pay the price of a dangerous boat ride across the Mediterranean.

They arrive in Greece and are moved through the Western Balkans, to richer Europe, except that while parts of northern Europe are rich, there are many people without jobs, or decent pensions, or hope for their children, who resent the mass arrival of immigrants.

This will get worse in 2016, with the rise of nationalist populism all over Europe from Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, to the anti-European National Front in France, and UKIP in England. The Brussels-bashing governments in Italy, Poland and Hungary will increase in force. Nationalist identity politics in Scotland, in Catalonia, and Corsica will also become stronger.

Instead of the Balkans becoming Europeanised, Europe is becoming Balkanised.

In the past, politicians sought to give people what they need. Now they give people what they want. What is necessary can be defined. What is desired knows no limits. The demagogues of the hard-right and the far-left are winning the upper hand over the democrats of the centre-left and centre-right. There is little hope that any of the Balkans' problems, from the recognition of Kosovo to the debt burden imposed on the Greeks, will be solved this year.

Source: excerpts from EurActiv.com

How will the political crisis in Montenegro affect its progress towards the EU?

Dialogue and elections



By: Svetlana Pešić

Depending on how constructively the opposition and the ruling Democratic Party of Socialists behave, the current political crisis in Montenegro could hinder the process of European integration, or provide an alibi to the DPS government to again paint itself as the beacon of stability and political gravitas, warned some of the experts the *European Pulse* spoke to. The upcoming elections must be conducted in line with the new electoral legislation, and a failure to reach an agreement in the Parliament of Montenegro would cast a shadow over the regularity of the elections, with potentially far-reaching consequences in terms of deepening of the current political crisis. Given that one part of the opposition is already boycotting the work of Parliament, a likely boycott of the elections or controversy over their outcome will do little to further the proclaimed goals of building trust in the institutions and the electoral process. Should, however, these elections pass without the already customary questioning of their legality and legitimacy, the European Commission would be able to focus its attention on other burning issues in the domain of the rule of law: such as the fight against corruption and organised crime, independence and efficiency of the judiciary, freedom of the media and the like.

After the debate in the Parliament of Montenegro and the vote of confidence for the Government, the Prime Minister **Milo Đukanović** offered the opposition to join the Government in order to create the conditions necessary for the organisation of general election. Đukanović offered the representatives of opposition parties to take over ministerial positions in interior affairs, labour and social care, agriculture, and finance, but under condition that the opposition candidates should be capable of carrying out all obligations related to the process of Euro-Atlantic integration, or be involved as deputies with special powers. A few days later, as part of the so-called *parliamentary dialogue*, the Prime Minister clarified that the special powers would entail that no public funds under control

“Hence, I believe that the current political crisis in Montenegro should not hinder the already well-established path of the country towards the EU. I believe that this is not the moment for the parties to weigh their power against one another, but a moment for the political elites to strive in the direction that will provide the citizens of Montenegro, and especially the young people, with the most promising future. The seriousness, dedication and pace of reforms depends on the Montenegrin authorities, and all delays on the way to EU mean a waste of time for its citizens”, Fajon concluded.

of a certain ministry that could be employed to undermine or sway the electoral process could be approved without the deputy's authorisation. To give the opposition the overview of the work of the inner cabinet, he also offered them the position of a deputy Prime Minister.

Following this offer, and in line with their previous efforts in the framework of the parliamentary dialogue, the leaders of DEMOS, URA and SDP - **Miodrag Lekić**, **Žarko Rakčević** and **Ranko Krivokapić** – proposed their own suggestions for the resolution of the political crisis, asking that in addition to the four ministries the opposition should be able to control the government in depth, by taking over the executive functions in public enterprises, agencies and funds. Đukanović replied that the opposition's requests do not “in principle contradict the approach I suggested in the Parliament”, and the negotiations are still under way. Representatives of Democratic Montenegro resigned from dialogue, stressing that they will not support any solution that does not lead to a completely new Government, but said they will not obstruct an agreement between the Government and the opposition. Socialist people's party (SNP) conditioned its participation in the potential joint Government, by, among other things, adoption of the Law

on Government, and a parallel organisation of parliamentary elections and referendum on NATO membership, which the majority of other participants deemed unacceptable. Nevertheless, an SNP representative continues to participate in the ongoing negotiations.

The European Commission's 2015 Progress Report on Montenegro stressed that the new electoral laws, adopted a year earlier, must be fully implemented and all future elections organised in accordance with the new laws. It noted that while the budget of the State Electoral Commission (SEC) has increased, this institution needed further strengthening. *"The judicial follow-up on the alleged misuse of public funds for party political purposes remains to be completed and political responsibility ensured"*, the EC stated.

Boris Marić, senior legal advisor at CCE and member of the working group for Chapter 23, told European Pulse that European integration has its own dynamic and that there is more or less a consensus in the country on the necessity to improve the quality of the process and accelerate integration into the European family of nations. *"Among other, the current political crisis was sparked by the commitments generated by the process of negotiations with the EU, especially those related to the establishment of the rule of law, that require a painful and dangerous fight against high level corruption and organised crime"*, Marić said.

"Montenegrin society has reached the point at which the abuse of power and public institutions greatly jeopardise the foundations of democracy, and especially of the legitimacy of electoral process. DPS, the leading party that for decades has been building its domination on the abuse of public funds, has to be deposed. This has become the public interest of the Montenegrin society, and a prerequisite for successful continuation of EU integration", Marić stressed.

He added that it was *"true that some right-wing groups on our political scene have a different view of the foreign policy priorities of the country, but these are still far from having the power that could jeopardise the process of transformation of the society in a pro-European one. Nevertheless, this could also slow down the process and allow DPS for the umpteenth time to paint itself as the beacon of stability and political gravitas"*.

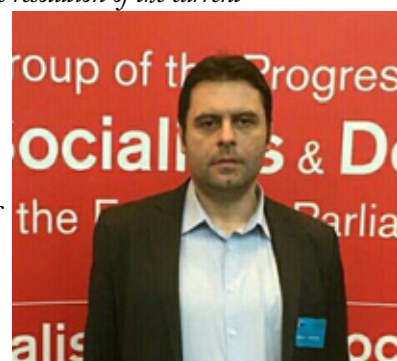
Ivan Vujović, head of the cabinet of the Speaker

"Montenegrin society has reached the point at which the abuse of power and public institutions greatly jeopardise the foundations of democracy, and especially of the legitimacy of electoral process. DPS, the leading party that for decades has been building its domination on the abuse of public funds, has to be deposed. This has become the public interest of the Montenegrin society, and a prerequisite for successful continuation of EU integration", Marić stressed.

of the Parliament of Montenegro and an official of SDP, summed up his reflections on the current political crisis in the following manner: *"The problem of trust in the electoral process is currently the most important political issue in Montenegro. The political, and to some extent even the social stability of the country depend on its resolution. Fair and free elections are the cornerstone of stability of any democratic society."* He added that Article 2 of the Montenegrin Constitution stipulates that *"The power not stemming from the freely expressed will of the citizens in democratic election in accordance with the law, can neither be established nor recognized"*.

Vujović reminded that *"the European Union, as a union of progressive, free and democratic states, that cherish the highest standards of democratic regulation, personal and political rights and freedoms, within the political criteria for the accession, unambiguously insists on free, legal and undisputed elections. This is why the last few progress reports included a special section dedicated to this issue, reflecting widespread allegations within Montenegro of various irregularities in the electoral process, especially following the presidential elections of 2013"*.

"All of this suggests that the resolution of the current political, that was primarily caused by a lack of trust in the democratic electoral process, will to a large extent influence the pace and quality of Montenegro's integration into European Union", Vujović said.



Ivan Vujović

He added: *"I rest assured that Montenegro will, through a constructive political dialogue, demonstrate the necessary maturity in resolving the current political crisis, demonstrating its commitment to the fundamental principles of electoral democracy that underpin all modern European states, and thus continuing its dynamic progress in the EU accession negotiations"*.



Predrag Sekulić

Predrag Sekulić, MP of the ruling DPS, disagrees with the claim that there is a political crisis under way in Montenegro. *"As far as the EU negotiations are concerned, they are taking place at a satisfactory pace regardless of political developments, as confirmed by the number of opened chapters. I believe that the Montenegro's path towards Europe can no longer be endangered by anyone."*

Report of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe Assembly, compiled by MPs **Terry Leyden** from Ireland and **Ionut Marian Stroe** from Romania during their visit to Montenegro from 17 to 19 November, states that political parties in Montenegro should continue with dialogue in order to restore confidence in the electoral process. It also states that without enforcement of the new electoral rules and necessary preparations, the upcoming parliamentary elections can only further undermined the trust in the electoral process, and that it is therefore imperative to ensure a timely preparation. Furthermore, the Council of Europe is *"convinced that boycotting the parliament can by no means be considered as a correct political stance"*, but nevertheless believes *"That the concerns and shortcomings expressed by the opposition and reflected in CoE's earlier reports need to be fully addressed. We thus encourage all political forces to re-engage in a constructive political dialogue in order to overcome the crisis and to prevent it from escalating, in the interest of the people of Montenegro"*. They moreover warned that trust in the electoral process is essential for the stable functioning of democracy and that the *"the ongoing tense political situation mainly derives from the contestation and frustrations linked to the alleged unfairness of previous elections. We witnessed a clear*

lack of trust, strong mutual criticism and a climate of confrontation between the political forces of the country".

Member of the European Parliament **Tanja Fajon** believes that *"European integration is the clearly laid out path and the only right one for*



Tanja Fajon

*a modern, successful Montenegro, regardless of the political party in power. The decision about EU membership – that is embodied in the current negotiations and adoption of the so-called *acquis communautaire* – is a decision about the rule of law, about a competitive economy, a stronger legal framework for the protection of human rights etc."*

In the interview for *European Pulse*, she emphasised that *"political stability is in the interest of every state. Countries in transition, which find themselves amidst the EU accession negotiations, should value political stability is all the more important to ensure the continuity of the much needed, and sometimes painful, reforms"*.

"Hence, I believe that the current political crisis in Montenegro should not hinder the already well-established path of the country towards the EU. I believe that this is not the moment for the parties to weigh their power against one another, but a moment for the political elites to strive in the direction that will provide the citizens of Montenegro, and especially the young people, with the most promising future. The seriousness, dedication and pace of reforms depends on the Montenegrin authorities, and all delays on the way to EU mean a waste of time for its citizens", Fajon concluded.

The Chief Special Prosecutor of Montenegro, Milivoje Katnić

We'll prevent obstruction of the Special Prosecutor's Office

Intensifying the fight against organised crime and corruption is certainly a priority in the work of the Special State Prosecutor's Office (SSPO), Milivoje Katnić, chief special prosecutor, told *European Pulse*.

» *How do you see the position of the SSPO and your own in the upcoming period?*

I see them both firmly embedded in the legal framework, i.e. committed to full accountability in the fulfilment of the assigned duties, to a professional approach and to the overall strengthening of the institution of credibility and independence of the Special Prosecutor's Office.

» *What will be your priorities in the upcoming period?*

Intensifying the fight against organised crime and corruption is certainly a priority for the Special Prosecutor's Office.

Naturally, pursuing financial investigations with the goal of permanently confiscating

perpetrate new crimes. The ultimate goal to launder these criminally acquired assets and channel them into legal activities. This is why confiscation of such assets accomplishes several goals at once: it deprives organized criminal groups of financial means for the perpetration of new criminal offenses, it prevents laundering of illegal assets and their investment in legal financial flows, and thereby protects the economy, the financial market and economic development of the society.

Finally, confiscation of criminally acquired assets is sometimes more important than the conviction of criminals whose activity has created these assets: indeed, they often consider the loss of assets a greater punishment than the sentences they receive for their crimes.

» *How optimistic are you that a Special Police Team will soon be established?*

As a Chief Special Prosecutor I do not wish to speak of optimism or pessimism, but of a real need to create all statutory requirements necessary for the proper functioning of the Special Prosecutor's Office. To accomplish the priorities I spoke about earlier, to wage more successfully the war on organised crime and corruption, I must have the complete team at my disposal.

It is necessary to complete the team that is at my disposal in order to implement priorities that I mentioned earlier, and to lead more successfully the fight against all forms of organized crime and corruption.

» *Are you satisfied with cooperation with the Police Authority, or is there space for improvement?*

I am more than satisfied with cooperation with the Police Authority's Department for the Fight Against Economic Crime. The achievements of this Department have



Milivoje Katnić

criminal assets is inextricably linked to this goal. The key objective of organized criminal groups as well as of corruption is to acquire material benefits that can be further used to



Milivoje Katnić

contributed significantly to the success of the Special State Prosecution and this is also why I gave my consent for the appointment of **Dragan Radonjić**, who managed the Department in the past, as the head of the Police Unit of the prosecutor's office. I am especially happy that 98% of the Ministry of Interior of Montenegro fully supports the activities of the Special Prosecutor in the fight against organized crime.

» How much has been done so far to complete the multi-disciplinary team and apply a multidisciplinary approach to the investigations of the Special Prosecutor?

Activities related to the formation of a multidisciplinary team are in the final stage.

In addition to the three associates already hired for the field of economic, financial and banking activities, we are now in the final stages of selecting the associates for the field of taxation.

The Special Prosecutor's Office will also be strengthened by experts in the field of information technology.

For complex cases, I form a Special Investigation Team, which in addition to the Chief Special Prosecutor includes other special prosecutors and police officers, investigators and civil servants from other relevant bodies. So far I have formed 10 such teams.

» How many plea agreements will, in your opinion, contribute to faster adjudication and reaching the final verdict? At the same time, how

Prepare to defend yourselves, those who stand in the way of the Special Prosecutor

» It has become a public knowledge that you are facing serious obstacles in your work. What kind of obstacles are those, in which circles do they originate and are they related to the government structures?

As I already stated, these are persons who want to prevent the Special Prosecutor's Office from coming to knock also on their door. As much as they are determined to prevent us, they will not succeed because we are more determined to do our job. Instead of obstructing the Special State Prosecutor, it might be better for them to start preparing their defences.

great is the danger that these agreements will be abused?

Plea bargains are a relatively new legal instrument in our criminal law practice. They were only introduced into our procedural code in 2009, and are more typical of the Anglo-Saxon criminal code, and for the so-called adversarial types of criminal proceedings. However, nowadays they are also widely accepted in many continental European laws on criminal proceedings.

The plea bargaining originates in the US court practice, where a high percentage of criminal court cases are concluded by a plea agreement - more than 90%.

No legal solution is perfect and this institute is certainly not free of flaws. However, its ratio legis in our Code of Criminal Procedure is to ensure a faster completion of criminal proceedings and reduce the costs, without undermining the objectives of interests of legality and justice. Its advantages are certainly that it reduces the duration of criminal proceedings and speeds up the verdicts, while protecting the rights of the injured party and, of course, ensuring that the perpetrators will be punished for the crimes they committed.

S. Pešić



Snorers can't be drivers

A new EU directive, which came into force on 1 January 2016, requires all drivers to carry a mandatory medical certificate that they do not suffer from sleep apnoea, a disorder that manifests in snoring. The directive applies to all professional drivers of buses, trucks, and even pilots, who risk losing their licence if they suffer from such a disorder. The research that motivated

this directive shows that drivers who suffer from this breath-obstructing sleeping disorder are responsible for some 30% of accidents with a fatal outcome. Penalties for not carrying the medical certificate will amount several thousand euro for the company and up to a 1000 euro for the driver.

Warsaw compiles a directory of stray cats



At the request of an MP, Warsaw made a directory of its stray cats, more than 30 000 of which live in the city. In 2015, the city implemented a EUR 340 000 programme of environmental deratization.

The money was spent on cat food, which was distributed by volunteers in each city district. The citizens supported the move, confident that the cats who live freely on the street protect them from the presence and excessive reproduction of mice and rats. The majority of the citizens support the authorities in their efforts to protect the cats, and provides assistance by leaving open the cellar windows in the winter to provide a shelter.

Denmark's reform of asylum authorises confiscation of migrants' property



On 26 January Denmark adopted a law based on which all belongings worth more than EUR 1 300 will be permanently confiscated from refugees in order to cover the expenses of their stay during the asylum procedure. The law caused numerous comments and controversies, and many

compared it to the confiscation of Jewish property in Nazi Germany, before and during World War II. Fearing domino effect, UNHCR condemned Denmark's move early this year,

saying that it could "incite fear and xenophobia" in other host countries. According to UNHCR, Copenhagen is violating the European Convention on Human Rights, Convention on the rights of child and UN's recommendations on refugees. Meanwhile, minister for integration and immigration **Inger Støjberg** said that such measures simply put immigrants in a position equal to the unemployed Danes who are also expected to sell all property above a certain value if they wish to qualify for social assistance. She insisted that these funds will be used to cover the expenses of health protection, education and housing. According to the new law, asylum seekers can keep belongings of sentimental value, such as family photos, medals and family jewelry, but the police can confiscate any other item that exceed the set amount. Denmark opted for this move after it became a country with one of the highest per capital number of immigrants last year, and estimated that it could no longer finance their stay and social integration.

European Union imports more than 50% of energy

According to the latest Eurostat report, the EU is not self-sufficient in terms of energy, as 50% of its consumption is covered by imports, mainly from Russia. Among the EU member states, Estonia (8.9%), Denmark (12.8%) and Romania (17%) are the least dependent on energy imports, while Malta (97.7%), Luxembourg (96.6%), Cyprus (93.4%), Ireland (85.3%), Belgium (80.1%) and Lithuania (77.9%) are the most dependent. Eurostat's data also show that the EU's dependence on imports increased between 1990, when approximately 44.2% of the EU's energy needs was imported, and 2014, when the share of imports stood at 53.45%.



Electric and hybrid cars gain popularity in the EU

During 2015, the sales of electric cars in the European Union doubled compared to the previous year. The Netherlands leads in the sales of electrically-powered vehicles. According to the European association of vehicle manufacturers (ACEA), a total of 146.161 electric cars was sold in the EU member states in 2015, a 108% increase compared to 2014. As for the hybrid cars, France is the largest market, followed by the UK, Italy and Germany.



Growing corruption in education

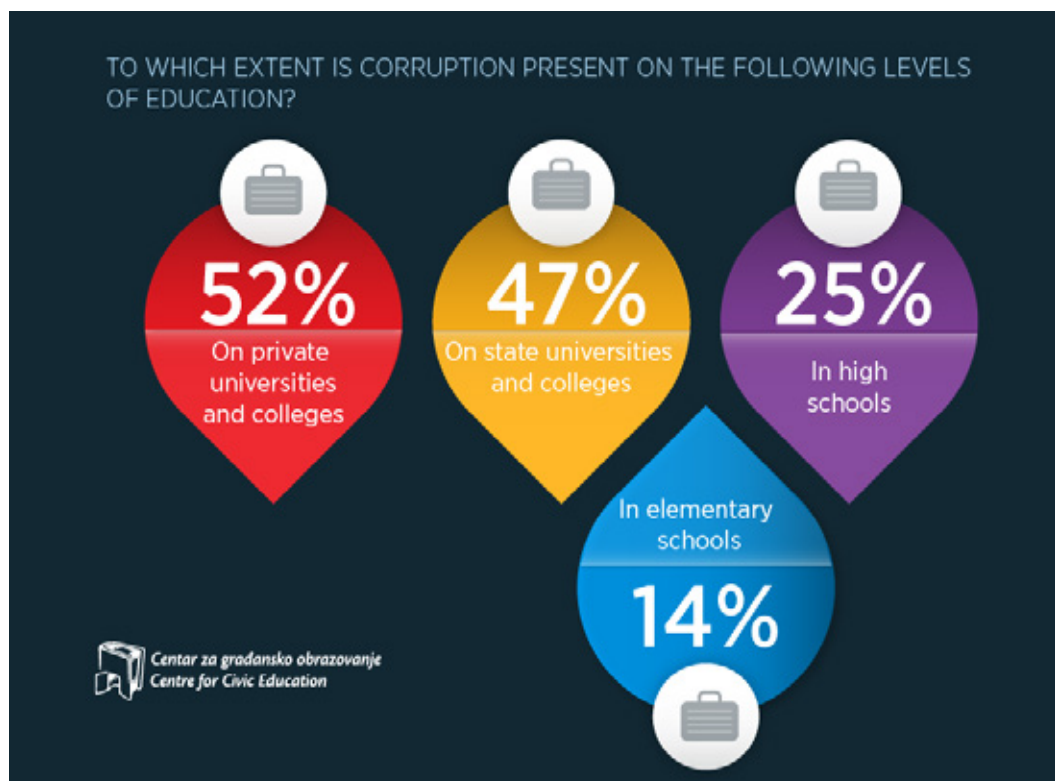
The perception of (non) corruption in the system of education in Montenegro is not uncontested, but it is worrying that the number of those who believe that various forms of corruption in this field is large, and according to most indicator continues to grow. These are the findings of the public opinion research on corruption in education, conducted as part of the project “*Only knowledge should get you the title*”, by Centre for Civic Education (CCE) in cooperation with ELIAMEP, and with support of the EU Delegation to Montenegro. The expert and fieldwork elements of the research were conducted by Ipsos Strategic Marketing.

52% of the polled citizens told researchers that corruption is present or widespread in private universities and tertiary schools. The number is slightly lower for public universities and schools (47%), and considerably lower for high schools (25%) and primary schools (14%).

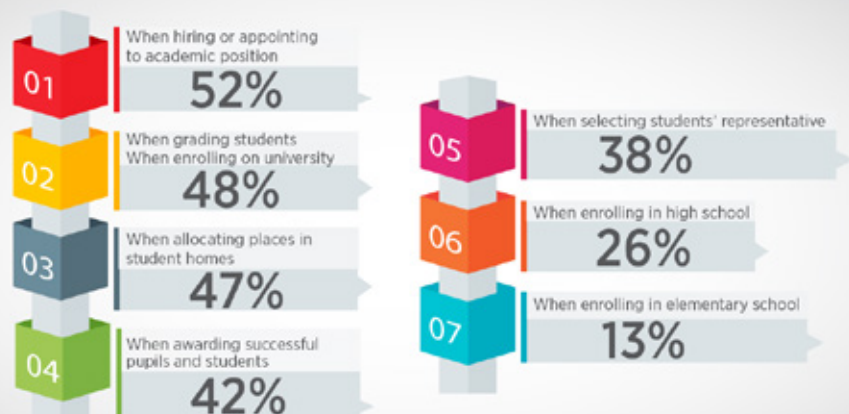
Half of the citizens in Montenegro believe that today it is possible to buy a valid diploma of a Montenegrin school or university.

This is a drastic increase in the perception of corruption compared to 2011, when a similar poll was conducted by CCE and CEMI - at the time, only 29% of the respondents said there was corruption in public universities, and the 18% increase in the perception of corruption in just four years should certainly worry the management of UoM.

According to the respondents, the area most prone to corruption is that of employment and academic appointments: 53% of the citizens said that corruption was present in this area at least to some extent. A little less than a half of citizens believe that corruption exists during the grading of students (48%), enrolment (48%)



ACCORDING TO CITIZENS, IN WHICH AREA IS CORRUPTION MOST PRESENT?



and allocation of places in student dorms (47%). The respondents also perceive the election of students' representative as a corruption-prone area (38%), while enrolment in high schools (26%) and primary schools (13%) is seen as the least prone to corruption.

The findings show that nepotism and reliance on political party connections are widespread in the Montenegrin education system (according to 61% of respondents), and no less common is the problem of bribery and gifts (42%). Only 15% of the respondents admitted that they personally used kinship, political, or other forms of ties to obtain a pass or a better grade at school or university (either for themselves or another person), but 18% said they would be ready to offer bribe to obtain such results. Especially worrying is the decline in the numbers of those

Nearly half of the citizens is familiar with the issue of double labour contracts at the UoM, which the CCE has been addressing for the last several years!



Have you heard of the issue of double working relations of professors at the University of Montenegro (work commitments of professors who are suspected to have a full-time employment at the University of the region)?

Montenegrin citizens are in no doubt that some students receive special privileges in our educational system (81%) - especially children of high ranking officials, wealthy parents, and party activists. Far fewer respondents saw the children of teachers as especially privileged.

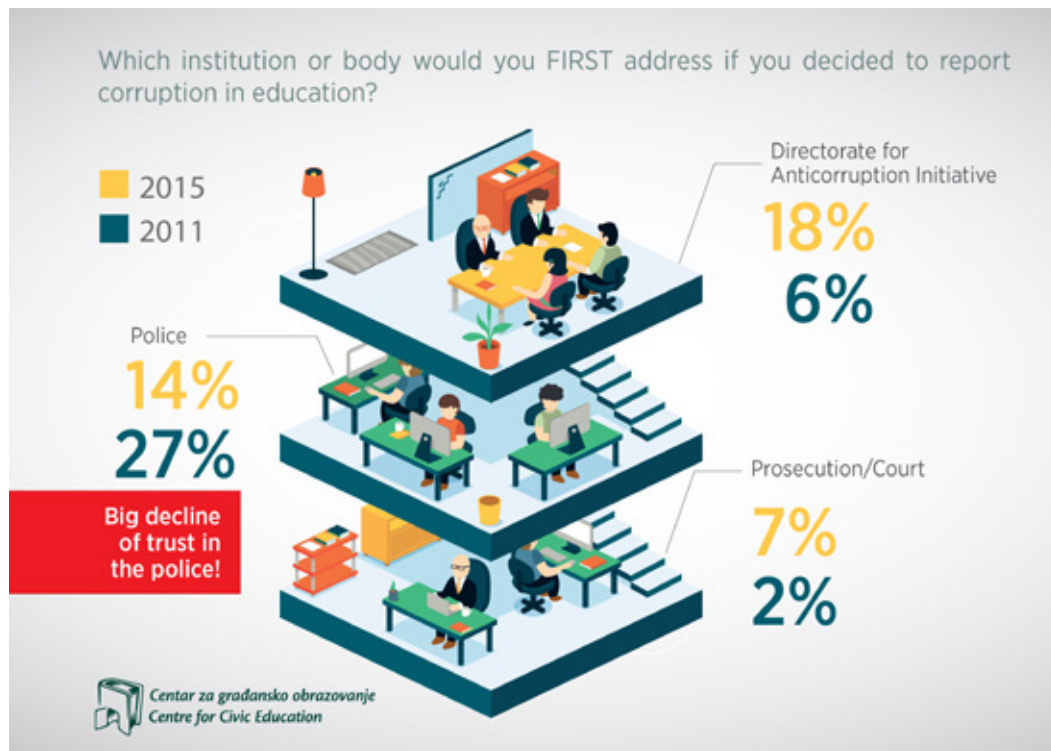
who said they would be prepared to report being asked for bribe in education - from 61% of the respondents in 2011 to 40% in 2015. This decrease undoubtedly reflects the lack of tangible results in the fight against corruption in education by relevant authorities in the recent years.

The issue of double appointments at UoM, which the CCE has dealt with extensively in the past, is gaining visibility and has been identified as a problem by nearly half of the citizens (44%), especially among the respondents with higher education degrees.

Montenegrin citizens are in no doubt that some students receive special privileges in our educational system (81%) - especially children of high ranking officials, wealthy parents, and party activists. Far fewer respondents saw the children of teachers as especially privileged.

Moreover, half of the citizens believe that it is today possible to buy a valid diploma of a Montenegrin school or university. When it comes to personal experience, 19% claim that they know someone who bought a diploma, and the figure is somewhat higher among citizens with higher levels of education.

As for plagiarism, another issue the CCE has been dealing with for a while, one third of citizens (35%) believe that plagiarism is relatively common in Montenegro. Far fewer respondents said they knew someone who plagiarised their research paper, MA or PhD thesis (14%), but this figure is higher among the citizens with higher levels of education, 27% of whom claim they know a plagiarists, found the poll. CCE suggested to the Operative team for development of the Action plan in line with the Open Government Partnership to make electronic publication of MA and PhD theses



CCE suggested to the Operative team for development of the Action plan in line with the Open Government Partnership to make electronic publication of MA and PhD theses mandatory. This solution to the problem of plagiarism in Montenegro is supported by 59% of the respondents, who believe this would solve the problem of plagiarism to a great or some extent. Another 25% believes it would only contribute in a small way to reducing the problem, while 16% is unsure

mandatory. This solution to the problem of plagiarism in Montenegro is supported by 59% of the respondents, who believe this would solve the problem of plagiarism to a great or some extent. Another 25% believes it would only contribute in a small way to reducing the problem, while 16% is unsure.

Some 2/5 of citizens believe that the problem of corruption in education has not received sufficient public attention. According to the respondents, the media (17%) and NGOs (16%) have done the most to raise the issue of corruption in education in the Montenegrin public debate.

A similar share of respondents (39%) are pessimistic on the possibility of reducing the level of corruption in education. Finally, it is important to stress that the citizens believe that corruption in education is an internal issue for the educational system, and that they see the Ministry of Education as being the most responsible for the problem of corruption in education, as well as for the work necessary to eradicate it (18%). In addition to the Ministry of Education, other institutions and causes singled out by respondents as the most responsible for the current state of education are the police, prosecution and courts (12%), the overall crisis of morals and social values (12%), the system of education as such (11%), poor material conditions of the teachers (10%), poor legal regulation (8%), teachers (8%), but also the political parties and political elite (5%), parents of pupils and students (5%), and the administration of schools and universities (4%).

The full study is available at: <http://media.cgo-cce.org/2016/01/istrazivanje.pdf>

S.P.

The deal between UK and the EU to prevent Brexit

Small concessions, big symbolism



By: dr Vera Šćepanović

After nine months of negotiations between the UK and the EU representatives, the Prime Minister **David Cameron** and the President of the Council of EU **Donald Tusk** managed to clinch a deal about new conditions of UK's membership in the EU. The deal had to be completed in a rush, so that it could be confirmed by all EU member states at the upcoming summit on 16 February, as the "in-out" UK referendum could already take place in June 2016.

The deal will allow Cameron to slip out of the tight corner into which he was backed during last year's general elections in the UK. At the time, the Conservatives tried to pander to the Eurosceptic sentiments of their voters, promising them a referendum on UK's membership in the EU by end 2017 if they won. The problem is that with all the inflammatory campaign rhetoric, the centre-right party never seriously intended to leave the Union. At best, Brexit will be a messy, protracted process that will bring uncertainty over economic and trade matters, a conflict with Scotland, and a possible exodus of investors.

The US President **Barack Obama** recently phoned Cameron to warn him to stay in the EU, and the US financial giant Goldman Sachs donated "a substantial six-figure sum" to the "stay" campaign, while warning that a break up with the EU could collapse the pound. Cameron has on several occasions confirmed his willingness to lead the "stay" camp, but he needs something to convince his voters that this is not a betrayal of British national interests and that UK is staying on its own, better, terms.

In fact, the "four demands to prevent Brexit" originally seemed to reach into the very core of the institutional arrangement of the European Union. The UK negotiators demanded a change of fundamental treaties to remove the

Anything can still happen in the remaining few months until the referendum, but as things stand now the big Brexit saga is likely to end like most other European crises - not with a bang, but with a few administrative adjustments

federalist aspiration embodied in the phrase "ever closer union"; they also insisted that non-Eurozone countries should have more say in what goes on within the Eurozone, specifically in the design of the banking union, and that there should be new provisions to "boost economic competitiveness" - diplomatic speak for allowing national parliaments to block EU legislation which they consider to be detrimental to their own economic interests. Most controversially, the UK insisted on its right to curb labour immigration from other EU member states, most importantly by banning their citizens from access to unemployment benefits for the first four years of their stay in the UK.

The eventual deal, announced by the Council President Tusk in early February, contains significantly watered-down versions of all four requests. The EU leaders were adamant that there can be no treaty changes, which would not only be politically explosive but would also require a lengthy ratification process by all 28 member states. Instead, a protocol will be signed and deposited with the United Nations exempting the UK from the ambition towards "ever closer union". It is unclear what this means in legal terms, however, and even less so in practical terms, as the UK has already been able to exempt itself from every step towards "closer union" in the past 30 years - from the Schengen agreement to the European Monetary Union. The demand for more say in the Eurozone matters received a similarly

ambiguous concession - France was firm that no non-Euro country will be allowed to veto Eurozone decisions and the UK only received vague promises about the right to be consulted in the future. The right of the national parliaments to "boost competitiveness" by blocking common EU regulations was also solved in a manner that would force the UK to engage more, and not less, with EU's other members and institutions. Namely, while no national parliament can unilaterally reject such legislation, if at least 55% of the national parliaments (around 16 member states) are opposed to it, they can send it back to the Council of EU for further consideration. This gives national parliaments a bit more clout, but it also leaves the final word with the EU institutions, and means that any time it wants a piece of legislation removed the UK will have to convince at least another 15 members to support its position.

The most controversial demand in the whole package proved to be the one concerning workers from other EU member states. The demand to introduce a 4-year ban on in-work benefits tears at the heart of one of the fundamental freedoms of the EU - the right to free movement of workers. The new East European member states see this as a direct attempt to discriminate against their citizens, some million and a half of whom have found employment in the UK. At the same time, this particular demand has found a sympathetic ear among some of the richer EU members that have been similarly inundated by labour migration from the East. Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen already vowed to back the UK in the negotiations with the EU, as Denmark is likely to pursue a similar deal that the UK would be getting, and the German Labour Minister Andrea Nahles also promised that Germany would help the UK to win the reforms on welfare benefits to migrants from other EU countries. The East European members are planning an extraordinary meeting of the Visegrad Group on 15 February to prepare a common position, but the biggest member, Poland, seems to have already accepted the UK's demands in exchange for political support which the new Polish government sorely lacks.

The most controversial demand is the one concerning workers from other EU member states, as it tears at the heart of one of the fundamental freedoms of the EU. The demand has stoked fierce opposition by the new East European member states, but some of the richer members such as Germany and Denmark have been sympathetic, suggesting that they might pursue similar measures in the future

It certainly helps that, just like with the other demands, the UK has been forced to accept a much weaker version of the "emergency brake" on labour migration. Instead of a complete ban, benefits will be gradually phased in for the citizens of other EU countries over a period of four years, and no member state will be allowed to pull the "emergency brake" at a whim. To be allowed to impose such benefit curbs, the country in question must meet certain conditions in terms of the volume of migrants, and must first secure the approval of the European Commission and the Council of EU.

The final deal is a far cry from the UK's initial demands, but the Prime Minister Cameron seems satisfied and has already launched the campaign to keep Britain in the European Union. His enthusiasm fooled nobody at home: the deal was lambasted in the UK conservative press, and a hearing in the House of Commons ended revealed that many members of his own party were dissatisfied with the outcome of negotiations. But the Prime Minister still has a few months to put together a strong coalition for the EU, and can rely on the powerful establishment forces as well as on the generally pro-European Labour. The other side, meanwhile, has a powerful ally in the general popular dissatisfaction, but lacks a single influential leader and - more importantly - a clear vision of what the life after EU will look like for the UK. Of course, anything can still happen in the remaining few months, but everything points out that, like most European crises, the big Brexit saga will end with a whimper and a few administrative adjustments.

Can the Balkans contain the refugees?



By: mr Vladimir Vučković

After more than a year since the start of the refugee crisis, Western Balkan states are facing a more serious immigration challenge than ever. Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia have been especially hit by the crisis, and it was estimated that so far they received more than 700 000 refugees. According to unofficial estimates, this figure could soon surpass the one million mark. The so-called “Balkan route” represents the most popular transit route for the refugees heading towards the countries of Western and Northern Europe, and this recently pushed some of the Balkan states to tighten their migration policies, some going so far as to raise razor-wire fences. Macedonia, one of the main transit points for the refugees, has been waging a full-fledged campaign to raise a wire fence along its border with Greece, trying to stem the flow of refugees who pass from Turkey to Greece. The question is - does Macedonia have the administrative and technical capacities to stop a new wave of refugees?

And more importantly: what will be the EU's answer to the migration crisis?

The EU member states are divided over how to solve the migration crisis. A group of states led by Germany, with support of France and the Netherlands, prefers the strategy of containing the refugees in Turkey, through joint control of the Greek-Turkish border on the Aegean, and redistributing them from the Turkish collection centres to the EU member states who are willing to take them. This strategy would halt and neutralize the Balkan transit route, and the West Balkan states would not have to deal with the migration challenge on top of all their own political, socio-economic and security challenges. The alternative policy is that advocated by the Visegrad group countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland), who enjoy the support of the EC

President **Jean-Claude Juncker**, Slovenia and Austria. According to their scenario, the future wave of refugees should be stemmed on the Balkans' southern borders, alongside the border between Greece and its northern neighbours – Albania, Macedonia and Bulgaria. Following the example of Hungary, these states advocate erecting the fences that would permanently stop the refugees trying to reach the EU.

It is unlikely, however, that the plan advocated by the Visegrad states will ever see the light of day. German chancellor **Angela Merkel** has already had a series of bilateral meetings with the Turkish Prime Minister **Ahmet Davutoğlu**, and it is likely that Turkey will agree to cooperate with the EU on migration in exchange for some political, economic, or most likely financial concessions. On the other hand, it is not realistic to expect that the Schengen agreement can be maintained by shutting down the borders towards Greece, and leaving this EU member state to take care of the refugees on its own. Greece has already been grappling with a severe economic and financial crisis for many years, and it should be expected that the key EU member states will show solidarity to the southernmost member of their club, both through cooperation on the refugee matters and through the strengthening of FRONTEX and protection of the EU's borders.

Last but not least, the to be played by Balkan states in resolving the refugee crisis will be important, but not crucial. It would be absurd to ask Macedonia, a country which is not an EU member state, to protect the Schengen area - especially if we remember that this country is currently engulfed in its own internal political crisis, and that it lacks infrastructure and capacities to cope with the refugee crisis.

CCE's annual study on the financing of media in Montenegro from public funds

Equal opportunities for all media in Montenegro?

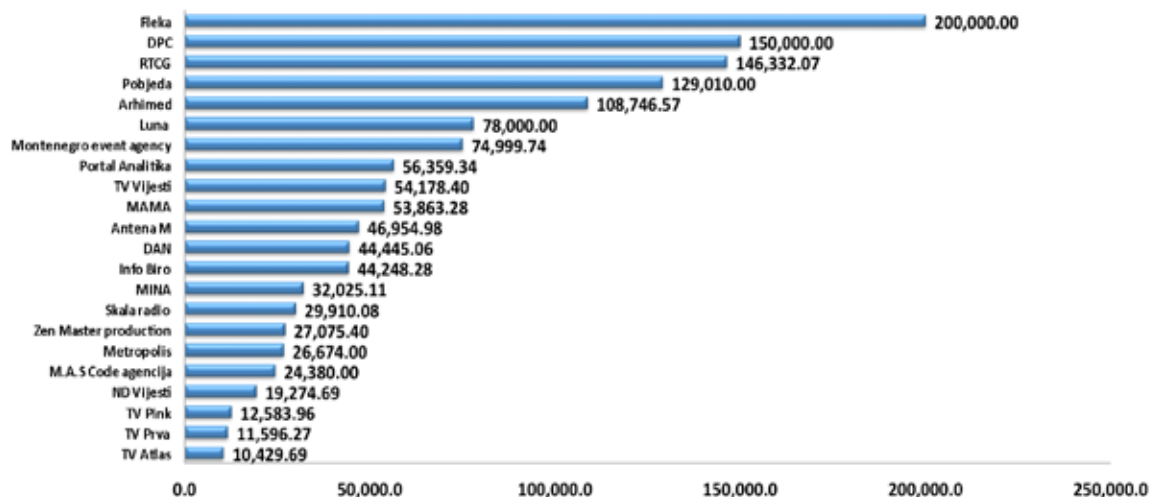
In late 2015, Centre for Civic Education (CCE), in cooperation with the UK Embassy in Podgorica, published the report “*Equal opportunities for all media in Montenegro*”. On 21 December 2015, the Report was presented at a conference opened by the UK ambassador to Montenegro H.E. **Ian Whitting**, who stressed: “*Everyone who lives in a democratic society is aware of the importance of the media. Democracy can hardly develop and endure without free media that report on the matters of public interest in a professional and ethical manner. In Montenegro, as in any other society in transition, the importance of this role is even greater. It is up to the media to investigate cases, report, and question ingrained opinions and customs. Here, the media are still vulnerable, regardless of the importance of their role. Media across the globe face serious financial problems, and the situation is even worse in the small Montenegrin market*”.

Pursuant to the Law on free access to information, CCE gathered information on the amount of funds allocated by public institutions to every medium, PR agency, production house and agency for research of public opinion. According to the Montenegrin Law on budget, the public sector includes all public institutions, independent regulatory bodies and commercial enterprise

CCE's research found that public sector bodies allocated 2.125.791.78 EUR to media in 2014.

in which the state or municipalities hold the majority ownership, as well as institutions of the judiciary. The findings of the report reveal opaque, unregulated financing of the media, opening the way to (ab)use of the media, violation of free competition in the media market and other factors shaping up the conditions for existence of public as well as private media. The result is the rise of *soft censorship* - attempts by the authorities to influence media reporting through various forms of pressure, but without recourse to bans, outright censorship or direct physical repression against media and journalists.

The media scene in Montenegro is pluralistic, and it consists of 21 TV channels, 55 radio stations, five dailies, one weekly and one news agency. The exact number of online magazines and portals is unknown. The total estimated value of the advertising market in 2014 was EUR 9-9.5 million, but due to poor economic activity in the wake of the economic crisis, it is estimated that a large share of funding comes from the public sector. CCE's research indeed revealed that



The largest recipients of financing from public funds in 2014

public sector bodies allocated 2.125.791.78 EUR to media in 2014. It should, however, be born in mind that this is not the final figure, given the 66% response rate from public sector entities we contacted through the research. It is therefore reasonable to assume that this figure is in reality much higher. Out of 334 public sector bodies covered by the study, 226 replied to our requests for information, while 116 did not submit the requested data.

Analysing the payments according to the type of medium - print, online, radio, portals and information agencies, marketing agencies and production houses, we found that the majority of funding – 42.2% went to marketing agencies and production houses. In this category, most of the funds were allocated to the agencies Fleka, DPC and Arhimed. Among the TV channels, the largest amount of funding went to RTCG. A much lower amount was allocated to TV Vijesti, followed by Pink M, Prva, Atlas and local TV stations.

EUR 213.570 were allocated from the budget to finance the services of print media, and more than a half of this amount was allocated to daily “Pobjeda”. “Dan ” is in the second place, but with considerably less revenue, and a slightly smaller amount was allocated to “Vijesti”, “Daily newspaper”, and other print media.

Online portals are gaining in popularity among the Montenegrin citizens. Among them, the largest amount of public sector financing went to Portal Analitika and news agency MINA the most, followed by Vijesti, CdM, RTCG, Pobjeda and Roditelj.me.

The largest public sector consumers of media services are ministries, led by the Ministry of sustainable development and tourism. According to the information received, ministries spent the most on the marketing agencies and production houses. Administrative bodies, on the other hand, spent the most on of their media budgets on TV stations. Local self-governments spent significantly less on media services, although our information is incomplete, as it is based on the responses of 19 out of 23 municipalities that submitted information on expenditures. As for the public institutions and companies, Elektroprivreda

The findings of the report reveal opaque, unregulated financing of the media, opening the way to (ab)use of the media, violation of free competition in the media market and other factors shaping up the conditions for existence of public as well as private media.

spent the most, and the largest amount of spending on media by public institutions and enterprise went to the TV stations. The office of the President of Montenegro listed MINA news agency and Info bureau as the only recipients of media-related funding. The judiciary bodies stated that they did not have any expenditures in this area, while the information on the spending of Ombudsman's office is not available.

Despite CCE's sustained attempts to raise the alarm bells about this problem, public sector financing of the media remains inadequately regulated, and the public bodies often engage in selective allocations of public funds intended for financial support to the media in Montenegro. Moreover, a significant part of the public sector did not submit reports on media financing when requested. It is hence necessary to establish a clear oversight mechanism for public financing and allocation of state aid to the media in order to ensure greater transparency of financing, as well as to protect media pluralism and freedom of the media.

To that end, CCE prepared a set of amendments to the current media laws, as a way out of the current situation and a path towards fulfilling the recommendations formulated in the previous reports.

This report is a continuation of several years of work dedicated to creating a clear oversight mechanisms for public financing and allocation of state aid to the media, and to informing the public, and especially the taxpayers, about the informing of public, especially of tax payers, on the way public monies have been used to finance the media sector. The complete report is available at <http://media.cgo-cce.org/2015/12/cgo-cce-jednake-sanse-za-sve-medije-u-cg.pdf>.

A.Nenezic / M.Kalezic

Human Rights Watch Annual Report

Human rights key to European future

“Western Balkans governments that aspire to European Union membership need to do a better job of living up to their human rights obligations,” said Lydia Gall, Western Balkans and Eastern Europe researcher at Human Rights Watch, on the occasion of the publication of HRW’s annual report on the state of human rights in the world. “That includes effective accountability for war crimes, combating discrimination against minorities, and ensuring access to protection and humane treatment for asylum seekers and migrants.”

This year’s report focuses especially on the difficulties faced by hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers on the so called “Balkan route”, which in the course of last year became the primary route for refugees from the Middle East trying to reach European Union. In addition to slow registration procedures and inadequate reception conditions in Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia and Macedonia, the situation of migrants and asylum seekers was additionally aggravated by cascading border closures.

Among other human rights issues in the Western Balkans, Human Rights Watch (HRW) emphasised limited prosecutions in national courts for war crimes during the breakup of Yugoslavia, a hostile climate for media, persistent discrimination against Roma, and harassment and intimidation of LGBT people and groups. Detailed reports on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo indicate that these problems are present throughout the region, often for similar reasons. War crimes prosecutors in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia are underfunded and lack sufficient capacity to deal with cases. According to current OSCE estimates, there is a backlog of more than 1 200 cases in Bosnian courts involving several thousand suspects. This is a huge number if we bear in mind that in the first ten years since the War Crimes Chamber of the State Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina became fully operational

Among other human rights issues in the Western Balkans, Human Rights Watch (HRW) emphasised limited prosecutions in national courts for war crimes during the breakup of Yugoslavia, a hostile climate for media, persistent discrimination against Roma, and harassment and intimidation of LGBT people and groups.

the number of completed cases reached only 290. Progress is often hampered by political interference: according to HRW, throughout 2015 the leadership of Republika Srpska repeatedly challenged the legitimacy of the state court and the state prosecutor’s office. The problem is even more pronounced in Serbia, where the lack of support from authorities is also accompanied by weak witness protection mechanisms, warns HRW. In Croatia too over 220 war crimes cases have yet to be addressed by national courts. Meanwhile, Kosovo’s parliament finally passed a law establishing a special court to try serious crimes during and after the 1999 war, but it has not yet become operational due to delays in concluding a host agreement with the Netherlands.

Lack of political will also hampers the fight against discrimination. HRW reminds, for instance, that even two years after the confirming judgment of the European Court for Human Rights Bosnia and Herzegovina failed to amend the constitutional provisions that prevent members of minorities from running for high political offices. Roma remain the most vulnerable group in the country, facing widespread discrimination in access to basic social rights. Lack of a free and universal birth registration system means that many Roma are not at all in the national public registries, which impedes their access to public services, including health care. In Serbia too HRW recorded new cases of discrimination and harassment by public authorities. In July, an informal housing unit in a Romani settlement in

Another area in which the region lags behind the EU standards in the protection of basic rights is the freedom of expression. The HRW report stresses that threats and intimidation of journalists remain frequent in the region, and that the response of authorities is often slow and ineffective.

the Novi Belgrade municipality was demolished by authorities without prior notification or alternative accommodation for the family living there. The planned evictions of another 53 Romani families was halted after the European Court of Human Rights intervened. In Kosovo, lack of political will, funds and cooperation between central and municipal authorities have contributed to the failure to implement the 2010 Strategy for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, and many of their members still face problems acquiring personal documents. The same is true of the Roma in Croatia who remained stateless after the dissolution of former Yugoslavia, warned the report, adding concerns about the continued practice of segregation of Roma children in schools.

Another area in which the region lags behind the EU standards in the protection of basic rights is the freedom of expression. The HRW report stresses that threats and intimidation of journalists remain frequent in the region, and that the response of authorities is often slow and ineffective. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the first half of 2015 alone the national journalists' association registered 52 cases of violations of media freedom and expression, including 4 physical attacks and death threats. The report also noted that political authorities often interfere with journalists' work, subjecting some media outlets to bogus financial and other governmental inspections. The situation is not much better in Serbia, where HRW counted seven attacks on journalists between January and August, and two cases of attacks on property. Some media have been subject to attacks by the top leadership. In January and February 2015, for instance, the Prime Minister **Aleksandar Vučić** accused independent online news portal BIRN of receiving money from the European Union to

discredit the Serbian government. His statement was followed by a month-long smear campaign by pro-government news outlets. Similar problems worry the journalists in Kosovo, like the Radio Kosova journalist **Serbeze Haxhijaj** who received threats from the former KLA fighters because she was investigating whether people who were not war veterans were included on war veteran lists to gain significant pension benefits. Between January and September 2015, Association of Professional Journalists of Kosovo registered 22 complaints of threats and intimidation against journalists.

Freedom of speech under fire

Montenegro is not featured in this year's annual report of the Human Rights Watch, but that doesn't mean that all is well with human rights in the country. The best illustration is the detailed report on freedom of expression and media in the region which the same organisation published in the summer of last year. It shows the situation in Montenegro to be just as bad as in the neighbouring countries, especially when it comes to the ineffectiveness of the authorities' response to attacks on media. The report notes that as a rule prosecutors choose to prosecute perpetrators for lesser crimes, that court proceedings are slow and that judges tend to hand out sentences at the lower end of the scale for crimes against journalists. Human Rights Watch also expressed its concern with the smear campaigns waged by pro-government outlets against the critical media and individuals, as well as with the "unacceptable statements by certain leading politicians, including personal insults", and frequent lawsuits against media by high-ranking officials who, despite the fact that libel had been decriminalized years ago, use civil lawsuits to financially exhaust and silence critical outlets. "If the EU is serious about its own membership criteria it should make respect for media freedom a priority in its negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia," said HRW researcher Lydia Gall in response to this report. "If these countries want to join the EU, their journalists shouldn't have to risk their lives and reputations to do their jobs."

Prepared by: V. Š.

EU programmes – a new space for education and development possibilities for youth

On 20 January a panel discussion on the topic *EU programmes – a new space for education and development possibilities for youth* was organized in the offices of the Centre for Civic Education. The panel is part of the project *Homo Europeanus – overcoming the knowledge deficit about the EU*, that is being implemented by CCE alongside 14 organizations from Italy, Spain, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Latvia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Serbia and Macedonia.

The panelists were **Petar Đukanović**, CCE programme coordinator, who presented the project and spoke about the ways in which young people can participate in the programme *Europe for Citizens* through their schools, faculties or organizations. The programme offers more than

180 million euro for activities and projects in the programming period 2014-2020. "Young people in Montenegro do not know much about the available exchange programmes and scholarships, and mobility opportunities provided by the EU, which - in addition to better educational career and preparation for the competitive labor market also offer the opportunity to develop basic competencies such as independence, creativity and critical spirit. It is therefore important to provide young people with information that can help them identify educational opportunities and possibilities, which can benefit not only them, but the society as a whole", Đukanović said.

The coordinator of the CCE youth group **Miloš Knežević** spoke about the Erasmus + programme and about his own experiences in it, emphasizing that the programme is a helpful resource for the young people who wish to overcome the challenges of the labour market through the adoption of



competitive skills, which will not only enable them to enter the labor market more easily, but also allow them a more active role in the society and in their own development. He also spoke about the programme structure and its key points, as well as the procedures for funding applications.

Marina Vuković, who holds a scholarship of the Government of UK Chevening programme as an MA student in human rights at the University of York, spoke about the experience of studying abroad, and the advantages and disadvantages of educational systems in the EU and Montenegro. She told the young participants that studying at prestigious European institutions is not an unattainable dream, but a very real possibility that should be used, and pointed out that many prejudices about the complexity of the application process should not prevent them from achieving their goals and ambitions. Studying abroad is a life experience that pays off in multiple ways, in personal as well as the professional sense.

The aim of the project is to contribute to overcoming the democratic deficit in the EU by improving the knowledge and motivation of citizens to engage in development of European societies as functional democracies, and multicultural and sustainable societies.

The panel is the first one in a series that will be organized in the course of the next two months on different topics concerning the European Union, the challenges it faces and opportunities within the process of European integration of Montenegro, with a special emphasis on the role and responsibilities of citizens.

Freedom of assembly in the Western Balkans

In Belgrade, on 25 January 2016 the Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM), Belgrade and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia organised a regional conference titled *Freedom of assembly in the Western Balkans*. The aim of this event was to present the *Guidelines on the freedom of assembly*, made by ODIHR and the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, to selected non-governmental organizations from the Western Balkans, in order to raise awareness of the need to uphold implementation of laws that regulate the freedom of assembly and align them with these guidelines.

Recommendations for improvement of the legal framework in the line with the OSCE standards have also been prepared, creating a forum for exchange of good practice and starting discussion about challenges faced by advocates of human rights in the region in protecting the right to the freedom of assembly, as well as about practical measures to overcome such challenges.

The conference brought together representatives and NGO activists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia. Among the speakers was **Tamara Milaš**, CCE programme associate.

Public debate about negotiation on chapters 10, 11 and 12

European Integration Committee organised on 29 January a public debate on the negotiation chapters 11 - *Agriculture and Rural Development* and 12 - *Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Policy* in the Parliament of Montenegro. Main speakers at the debate were **Marija Maja Čatović**, Deputy Chairman of the Committee, **Benoa Esman**, programme manager for agriculture and rural development in the EU Delegation to Montenegro and **Danijela Stolica**, negotiator for chapters 11 and 12.

A few days earlier, on 19 January, a similar debate was organised on the negotiation chapter 10 - *Information Society and Media* by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Office of the Chief Negotiator, European Union Delegation to Montenegro, the British Embassy and the British Council. On that occasion, the chief negotiator **Aleksandar Andrija Pejović**, said that Montenegro had achieved great progress since the opening of this chapter, but that work should be continued, to ensure that the citizens can feel the progress and benefits of EU membership in this field. Similar sentiments were expressed by the representative of the Delegation of the EU, **Patrik Schmelzer**, followed by a member of the working group for this chapter, prof. Dr. **Andelko Lojpur**, and the Head of the Department for European Integration of the Ministry for Information Society and Telecommunications and the head of the working group for Chapter 10 **Ružica Mišković**.

The aim of these debates is to inform the public, media and civil society with the content of the negotiation chapters and the results achieved so far by the working groups for this chapter. On behalf of the CCE **Mina Kalezić**, European integration programme assistant, attended the debates.

A.N

2016 International Summer School in Comparative Conflict Studies

The Center for Comparative Conflict Studies (CFCCS) at the Faculty of Media and Communications (FMK), Singidunum University invites you to apply for the seventh *International Summer School in Comparative Conflict Studies*. The 2016 Summer School will take place at the Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade, from 27 June to 4 July 2016.

Eligible participants: graduate students, advanced undergraduate students, individuals holding professional positions in the civic, public or private sector.

For more information on the Summer School courses and on tuition please visit <http://cfccs.org/summer-school/2016-summer-school>

Deadline for applications: 25 March 2016

For all questions and information please contact: summerschool@cfccs.org

Master's Degree in Southeast European Studies at the University of Athens

The Postgraduate Programme in "Southeast European Studies" will accept up to twenty-five (25) students for the academic year 2016-2017. It is one-year Master's programme taught entirely in English at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. It offers interdisciplinary education in social sciences, specialising in the study of the region of Southeastern Europe.

The Programme is addressed to graduates in the social sciences and humanities. Based on its interdisciplinary character, aiming to provide a thorough understanding of the key social, political, and economic issues of Southeastern Europe. It has an excellent student-teacher ratio, and a strong international character, actively encouraging the participation of students from around the world. In addition to its academic aims, the Programme offers a unique opportunity for students and professors with different backgrounds and experiences to spend an academic year in Athens, learning about Southeastern Europe with and from each other.

Students who are citizens of specified Southeast European countries (i.e. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo (under UNSC Resolution 1244) Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and who are not in receipt of a scholarship from any other source may apply for a fees waiver.

Deadline for applications: 17 June 2016

For more information visit website www.see.pspa.uoa.gr

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