

European pulse

Electronic monthly magazine for European Integration – No 81, June 2012

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Judiciary in EU's image

interview

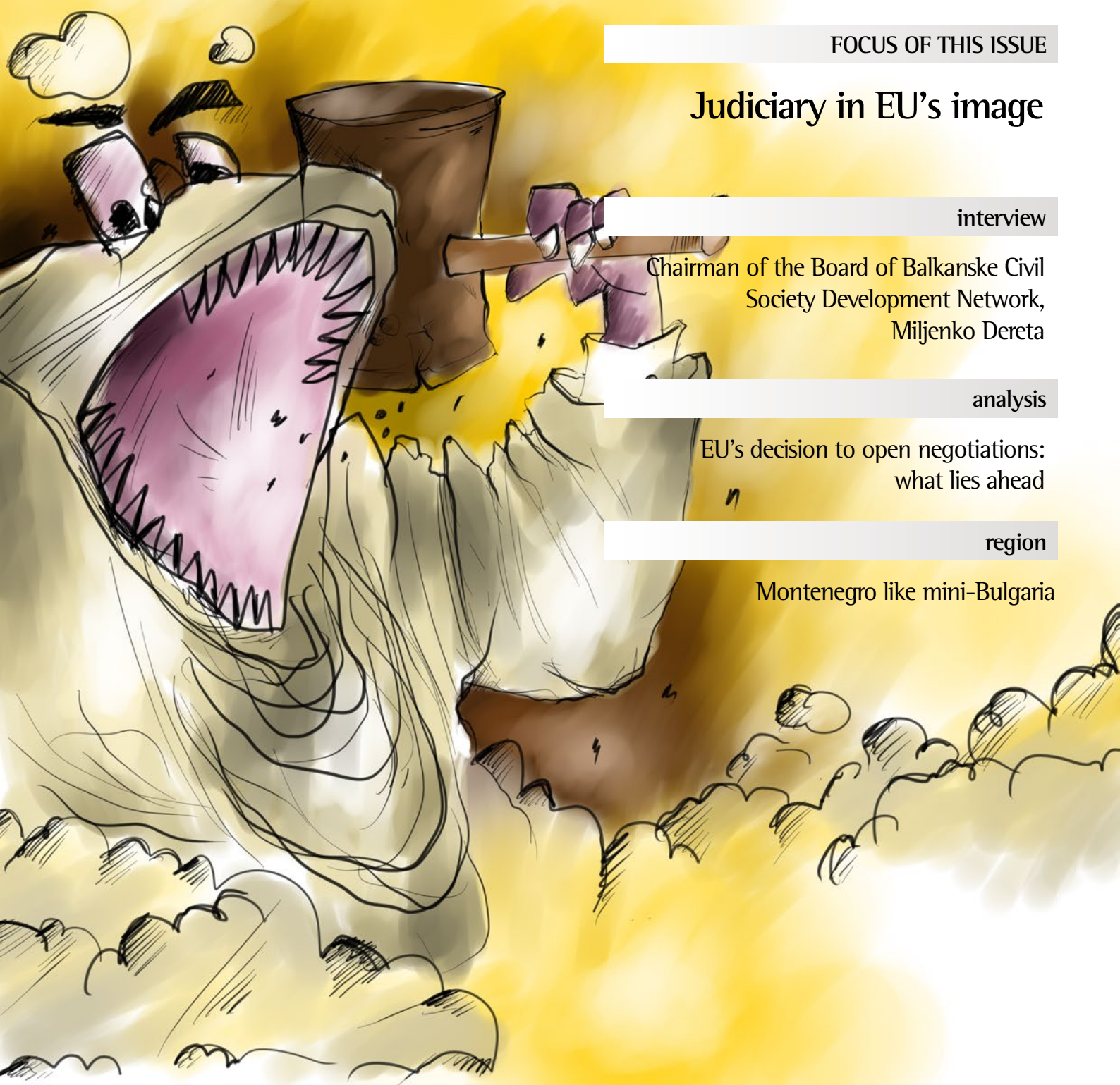
Chairman of the Board of Balkanske Civil
Society Development Network,
Miljenko Dereta

analysis

EU's decision to open negotiations:
what lies ahead

region

Montenegro like mini-Bulgaria



Foreword: **Opening**

Vladan Žugić

EU's decision to open the accession negotiations with Montenegro in the moments its very existence is under a question mark is of great importance to both parties. The EU stands to regain credibility in the eyes of the West Balkan countries, where the pro-European forces have been feeling increasingly abandoned an inward-gazing EU of the last few years. It is also a reminder to the EU citizens that it's not so bad, being part of the club, as they may be thinking at the moment, and that there are many out there queuing to get in. In the words of the Commissioner **Štefan Füle**, „Montenegro's desire to join us is a great vote of confidence in the European project”. On the other hand, the true pro-European forces in Montenegro need not worry any more that they might be pushed back into the hopelessness of the EU backyard, as was the case with Macedonia. Process-wise, Montenegro did a great deal from the moment the EC announced its seven conditions for the beginning of negotiations. Increasingly, the civil sector takes part in public policy making, and its relations with the government are mostly cordial. A new electoral law came into force by consensus of the great majority of parties, and the media and the journalists need not fear draconic fines and prison sentences. Finally, the outgoing head of EU Delegation to Montenegro **Leopold Maurer** reminded us of something that nearly went by unnoticed – the “Zavala” case. In spite of its political underpinnings, which are undeniable, it might well have ended up buried in the folders of the prosecution or the judges, like so many times before, had it not been for the involvement of the Commission and the Member States. We should accept, in Maurer's words, that this was indeed “the first time in many years” we have seen a high-ranking DPS official convicted. Highways no. 23 and 24 are now open, but the travellers shouldn't expect a pleasant drive.

Calendar

- 11 June **Sweden, Netherlands and France against the opening of negotiations** / According to the various media, Stockholm believes that the Montenegrin government is “covering up” the severity of its problems with crime and corruption. For the same reasons, Paris retains reservations, and besides the fresh-out-of-elections government does not yet have an enlargement directorate. In the meantime, the Netherlands, which is being run by a transitional government until the elections this September, is traditionally unenthusiastic about enlargement to the Western Balkans.
- 13 June **Maurer: there will be no untouchables** / The outgoing Ambassador to EU Delegation in Montenegro **Leopold Maurer** said the courtroom finish to the “Zavala” case shows it is also possible to prosecute DPS officials, in spite of the doubts about the final sentence. In an interview to “Vijesti”, Maurer said the Commission and the EU will “closely monitor all phases” of the cases which have been singled out as high-level corruption by the Montenegrin public.
- 21 June **Montenegrin ham too salty** / The Dutch Parliament gave support to the beginning of negotiations with Montenegro. In the meantime, Germany urged France to also agree to the start of accession talks.
- 25 June **Bildt: Montenegro is a centre of money laundering** / On the eve of the Council of EU meeting where the ministers are to decide on the opening of accession negotiations with Montenegro, head of Swedish diplomacy **Carl Bildt** said the EU was worried about organised crime and corruption in the Balkans, and that the problem was “especially grave” in Montenegro.
- 26 June **Green light, Europol also on board** / At a meeting in Luxembourg, Ministers for Foreign Affairs of EU member states proposed to begin accession negotiations with Montenegro. “The Council calls on Europol, the European police service, to submit a report on the state of organised crime in Montenegro, and urges EC to take Europol's inputs into consideration in the conclusion of its screening report”. This is the first time Europol was made part of the enlargement process, on the insistence of Carl Bildt.
- 29 June **Negotiations officially begin** / Negotiations on membership in European Union between EU and Montenegro have begun with an inter-governmental conference, following the political and institutional confirmation by the heads of EU states and governments of the earlier decision taken by their foreign ministers. The participants at the conference agreed this was a historical moment for Montenegro, but also for EU, because it resolved to move on with the enlargement in the midst of the crisis. “Montenegro's desire to join us is a big vote of confidence in the European project” said the Enlargement Commissionaire **Štefan Füle**.

Unfinished business in the EU and the Balkans



Rosa Balfour is a Senior Policy Analyst at the European Policy Centre (EPC) in Brussels.

On 26 June 2012 the EU gave Montenegro the green light to start accession talks. With Croatia set to join the EU next year, the enlargement process seems to be on track. But in reality, the pace of the politics of enlargement swings back and forth. Periods of acceleration are often followed by spells of stalemate. This is a result of unfinished business in both the EU and the Balkans. The EU remains committed to enlarging to the Balkans; the geostrategic peace-building logic is still there. But all too often it shows cold feet. The Balkan countries are committed to their 'Europeanisation': nearly all political parties claim to have converted to this path. But frequently politics in the region is marred by the ghosts of the recent past. The end result is that the enlargement process moves forward at a snail's pace, and the Commission has to resort to much ingenuity to keep the momentum going. Unlike Zagreb, Podgorica will have to start negotiating the last chapters first: chapters 23 and 24. Starting with the hardest chapters reveals all the EU's reservations about the Balkan countries' preparedness to join the EU. Now these countries have to demonstrate a track record in the area of negotiation before accession talks can begin. To be fair, it is in the interest of Balkan citizens for their governments and institutions to become examples of full respect of the rule of law. But the emphasis on benchmarks, to be individually set by the Council on the basis of unanimity, gives the process plenty of opportunities to be vetoed by one member state or another, for a variety of reasons which may not always have much to do with the issue at stake. Add to this malaise the troubles in the region, and the picture is far from rosy. The previous enlargement round was at times held hostage to bilateral disputes between one member state and a candidate country, for instance between Italy and Slovenia. Slovenia-Croatia was another appetiser for trouble that could come in the future. The Croatian parliament remarkably voted not to subject the accession process of the other Balkan states to bilateral requests, but the country so far stands alone in making this important gesture. In the Balkans, there still are a myriad of smaller unresolved bilateral disputes



over borders, cadastral records and other legacies of the Balkan wars that would need to be resolved before accession. Throughout the region, spectres of the past continue to infect political and civic life, blocking the road to renewal and change. Is there any light at the end of this tunnel? The EU will not turn its back on the 2003 Thessaloniki commitment, however cold or tepid it may appear at a time of crisis. Integrating into the EU remains the only possible path for the Balkans, an enclave within the EU; no other power or country can offer a similar prospect. Overall, the Balkans themselves have become a much better place than they were ten years ago. Nationalism is still popular, and an easy trap for the electorate to fall into at a time of unemployment and economic stagnation. But at the same time, there have been changes in attitudes. And even if political leaders still fall too often into the trap of nationalism, they too have come to terms with the EU accession option: political convergence over this has actually never been so broad. Unlike Central Europe, the Balkans have not easily switched to the EU integration prospect; similarly, the EU is not unequivocally embracing enlargement. A visionary conclusion to this brief contribution to the debate on enlargement may not be possible, but a pinch of realism can help: the unfinished business in the EU and in the Balkans will stay with us, as will the eventual expansion of the EU to include the Balkans. Shall we let it 'stay' with us, or shall we embrace the challenge?

Source: excerpts from EPC publication.

Montenegro has the highest per capita number of judges in Europe, but its judicial system is still far from the EU standard

Fitting the EU wig on a Montenegrin head



Damir Nikočević

Reduction in the number of judges and assistants, continuous education of the remaining staff, clear promotion criteria, rationalization of the network of courts, better provisions for alternative settlement procedures... All of these are likely to come up during Montenegro's negotiations with EU on Chapter 23. Montenegrin judiciary enters the battle hardly prepared, far from being a beacon of efficiency and lacking trust in its independence. Harmonization of the national legislation with EU acquis in the area covered by Chapter 23 aims to ensure the rule of law on all levels, founded upon an effective judiciary and mechanisms protecting human rights. The chapter is composed of four sub-areas: judiciary, fundamental rights, anti-corruption and the rights of EU citizens.

Executive director of NGO Human Rights Action Tea Gorjanc Prelević said Montenegro should analyse and apply best practices from other countries which have a more efficient track record with fewer judges and even fewer supporting staff.

The last progress report of the European Commission warns that "the number of unresolved cases before Montenegrin courts declined by 4% in 2011 compared to 2010, but this still means a backlog of 11.500 cases. The network of court should be streamlined, the quality of court statistics should be improved, and a system put in place to monitor the length of cases". Simply, the numbers show that Montenegro has the highest per capita number of judges in Europe and an equally large backlog of cases. The logical question is how to build up a system where fewer judges will clear up the backlog a larger cohort

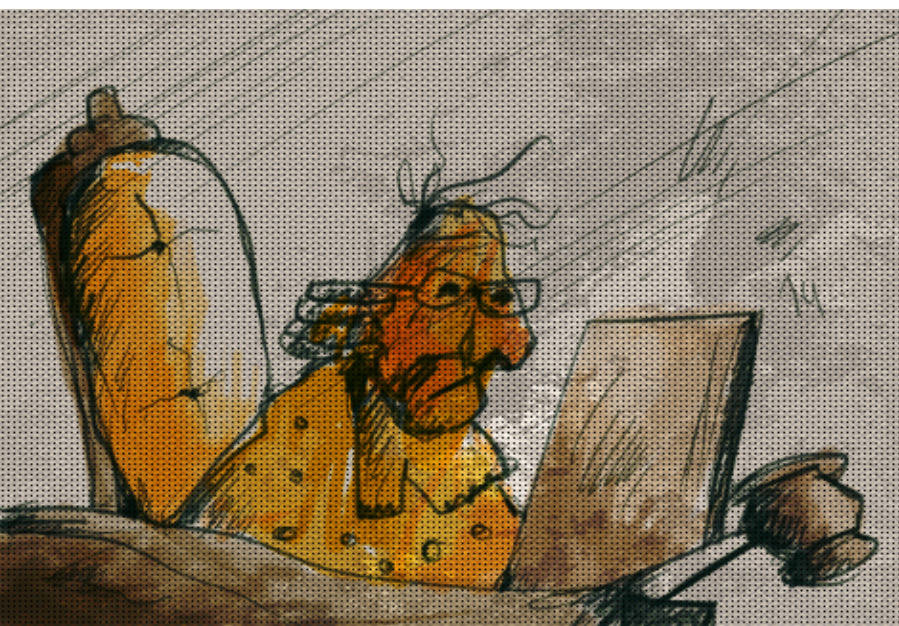
Kristijan Turkalj from the Croatian Ministry of Justice believes the Croatian experience in the negotiations on Chapter 23 promises that a country can take numerous measures to strengthen the independence, impartiality, professionalism and effectiveness of its judiciary

couldn't get through. Executive director of NGO Human Rights Action **Tea Gorjanc Prelević** doesn't believe that the European Union will ask for radical cuts in the number of judges.

"I don't think the European Union will be asking for radical cuts in the number of judges: rather, it will demand that they become more efficient. The fact that Montenegro, and Balkans in general, have more judges and court employees than countries in Western Europe, while the efficiency lags behind, demonstrates that something isn't working



and that we need to change some practices". **Kristijan Turkali** from the Croatian Ministry of Justice and member of the working group 23 for negotiations with European Union told



Vlado Dedović, coordinator of the legal programme in the NGO Monitoring Centre (CEMI) and member of the Working Group for negotiations on Chapter 24 believes there is still much space for improvement in this area, especially when it comes to mechanisms that protect the citizens' right of trial within reasonable time.

European Pulse that the right approach to the rationalization of the court network can only be developed once proper research has been conducted in Montenegro. He described the Croatian experience as follows: "The problem lay in the fact that Croatia had too many courts and offices of public prosecutors. The material costs of maintaining all those buildings took a high toll on the ministry's budget, without adding much to the quality of the judiciary infrastructure. Besides, so many courts meant a large number of court presidents, with the accompanying staff, which further undermined the efficiency of the Croatian judiciary", Turkalj explained. He added that even though the process was still not finished, it had already yielded significant positive results. **Vlado Dedović**, coordinator of the legal programme in the NGO Monitoring Centre (CEMI) told

Executive director of NGO Human Rights Action, Tea Gorjanc Prelević says that according to the 2010 study of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) of the Council of Europe, Montenegro has the third highest number of judges per 100 000 inhabitants in Europe, after San Marino and Monaco: 39.7 against the European average of 20.6.

European Pulse that rationalization of the court network in Montenegro is part and parcel of the overall reform of judiciary which, according to him, should result in greater efficiency of the judiciary, leading to improved legal, economic and social security of the citizens. "So far, there was not much discussion of the process of rationalization in the judiciary, nor was there a clear opinion among the experts on the best approach to the rationalization. Undoubtedly, however, based on the statements of the key figures in the judiciary and on the reports by the international organisations, it would appear that the rationalizing process is inevitable", Dedović said. He added that in this moment Montenegro and its judiciary should focus on developing an environment where effective implementation of the rule of law will be the priority. This means focusing on high quality, tenable verdicts in the court processes, instead of simply trying to get as many as possible out of the way. In a recent report by the Government of Montenegro, produced as a supplement to the European Commission Spring Report, the government claims there was significant improvement in efficiency as evidenced by the reduction in the backlog of unresolved cases. According to the Government, 249 judges in Montenegro were on average assigned 636.3 cases, and completed on average 485.87 cases. In other words, there are 152.43 cases per judge which remain unresolved. These cases, especially the older ones, have been dragging on for years, violating a fundamental right of all citizens: *reasonable length of trial according to international standards*. Dedović recalls Article

6 of the European Convention on Human Rights, regarding protection of all parties in trial from excessive and unjustified delays in the process. “Based on its long-standing case law, the European Court of Human Rights established the following criteria for assessing whether the duration of proceedings was reasonable: complexity of the case, the applicant’s conduct, the conduct of the competent authorities and whether the case is a priority, i.e. the importance for the applicant”, Dedović quoted, adding that all relevant international standards for the right of trial within reasonable time have been incorporated into Montenegro’s legal framework, and that the last years have seen much progress in the implementation of the right of trial in reasonable time before Montenegro’s courts. Turkalj explains: “Bearing in mind the practice of the European Court of Human Rights so far, we can draw some indicative conclusions about what is considered “reasonable time” for trial, i.e. when the requirement of trial in reasonable time has been violated. For criminal cases, a trial lasting up to five years is generally considered reasonable. For the cases in the domain of the civil law, which by their nature enjoy priority status, the duration of the trial will be considered reasonable up to two years. More complex cases within the civil law, a reasonable period could be extended up to eight years. For regular cases under the civil law, the commonly accepted reasonable duration is three years; for priority administrative cases two years, and for other cases of standard complexity up to five years”. Dedović nevertheless believes there is much space for improvement in this area, especially with respect to the mechanisms for the protection of the right of trial within reasonable time, provided for under the Law on the protection of the right of trial within reasonable time. “This much was even explicitly pointed out in the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in the case *Živaljević vs. Montenegro* of March 2011”, says member of the Working Group for negotiations on Chapter 24

Kristijan Turkalj from the Croatian Ministry of Justice explained: “European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) regularly collects the data on the number of judges per unit of population. However, these figures should be taken with some reservation, since they do not reflect the context which can also influence the number of judges in a country. Here the most important contextual variable is the legal tradition which represents the foundation of the country’s system of justice. It is therefore very difficult to compare states which are based on the continental tradition against those which rely on the Anglo-Saxon case law.

(Justice, Freedom and Security). Gorjanc Prelević said Montenegro should analyse and apply best practices from other countries which have a more efficient track record with fewer judges and even fewer supporting staff. “I believe we should seriously reassess the quality of education provided by our legal departments, especially the extent to which the students are prepared to tackle practical problems, instead of memorizing theory”. According to Kristijan Turkalj, Croatia’s experience in the negotiations on Chapter 23 promises that a country can take numerous measures to strengthen the independence, impartiality, professionalism and effectiveness of its judiciary. Objective, transparent criteria for recruitment and promotion will not only improve independence, but also impartiality of the system. A major step in the direction of greater quality of judiciary, according to Turkalj, is the establishment of a Legal Academy, an independent institution with adequate financial and human resources. “Information, specialisation, better regulations and greater recourse to alternative settlement procedures all raise the effectiveness of the judiciary. And this is just a small part of all issues Croatia had to tackle during the accession negotiations”, he warned.

What comes after the Council's decision to open accession negotiations with Montenegro

The new era



Nedeljko Rudović

Montenegro moves ahead. After giving it the conditional green light in December 2011, the heads of EU states and governments decided to open negotiations on Montenegro's accession, beginning the most demanding and probably the most exciting phase of Montenegro's road to a functioning state based on the rule of law. If we won't do it on our own, we are hoping Brussels will be helping us to get rid of systemic corruption which permeates all levels of the government, from municipalities to state administration and from hospitals to universities. The reasoning is straightforward: if the one at the top has dirty hands, the best is to get everybody below to dig in as well, so that if the thing ever gets to court nobody will be willing to testify. With EU's help, Croatia has broken out of the vicious circle: we can only hope the same will happen to us. We should also expect political turmoil as the government is squeezed between the need to preserve the solidity of its ranks and protect the "deserving" party cadres from investigations, and its commitment to proceed fulfilling the demands of each chapter. If there is no progress in the negotiations, the government's competence will be questioned, and it won't be allowed to move an inch ahead without tackling the key chapters – 23 and 24. In other words, there is no way ahead without a battle against crime and corruption, which inevitably means arresting your party colleagues. The clash of interests in the ruling party is bound to come sooner or later, but the outcome remains uncertain – above all, because those whose hands are the dirtiest also have a lot of money, connections to the mafia and friends in the security forces. On the other side stands a growing free public, with powerful allies in the West, which should eventually allow the progressive forces to take over. At this historical turning point, which will lay ground for the future of this small but potentially prosperous Mediterranean country, the most encouraging trend is precisely the renewed strengthening of the civic conscience. Unlike all other Balkan states which descended from former SFRY, except Slovenia, Montenegro has a powerful civil society – influential independent media which do not obey the government or aid its construction of Potem-



kin's villages, well established non-governmental organisations doing work that ought to have been done by public institutions, and one out of two trade unions genuinely fighting for the rights of the workers, instead of channelling manipulations that originate in the Government. It is equally important that these pillars of the civil society are well coordinated, working together to move the better future of the Montenegrin society into the focus of the public debate, and creating a powerful effect of synergy. In this way, they practically act as a substitute for the opposition which in the last five years couldn't and wouldn't find a way to mount a genuine threat and hold the government accountable. Slowly, however, there are also changes in the opposition, which could eventually change the balance of forces. The overall result will be a sobering effect on the decision-makers and growing awareness that there can be no progress without painful cuts and genuine reforms. This configuration is the proof that the Government cannot take all credit for the opening of negotiations – if Montenegro were a country with one all-powerful party without a trace of alternative, it might not have gotten the green light to start negotiations. Perhaps even the geostrategic interests of the most powerful members would not have been enough to move it forward. Either way, it's the beginning of a new era.

Chairman of the Board of the Balkan Civil Society Development Network, Miljenko Dereta

NGOs inspire fear and a sense of competition in the political elite



There are too many elites and parts of civil society who find the current conditions quite comfortable and have no desire to really change anything and implement the reforms that might eventually undermine their position or impose some control on their activities.

One of the most prominent civil society activists in Serbia, chairman of the Board of the Balkan Civil Society Development Network **Miljenko Dereta** said he hopes that the start of negotiations in Montenegro will have a positive effect on the entire region. According to him, it is a sign that these countries, in spite of all their problems, can satisfy the basic criteria for the start of negotiations. "For us in Serbia, it is a huge encouragement, but also a source of frustration because we are obviously lagging behind more than we should", said Dereta in the interview for European Pulse.

The progress, he said, cannot be made by government alone. "One of the criteria is full cooperation with the civil society, to have citizens involved in civil society organisations in order to demonstrate a kind of maturity and responsibility for their lives – all of this is a precondition to move to where you are now in the process. I expect Montenegro and its civil society organisa-

tions to acquire much experience in this phase, which will be helpful for the rest of us when we begin negotiations to avoid the pitfalls that are bound to be hidden in the process", Dereta said.

» How do you then see Montenegrin government's warnings that the NGOs shouldn't be doing politics?

NGOs are always doing politics, because they want to change the society. This is politics, not sports and entertainment. These objections come from another age, which hasn't been keeping up with the outside world.

Here the NGO sector is seen as a kind of network of small interest groups. That is quite worrying, because it excludes the citizens from the decision-making process and sneers at all the achievements so far. It's a matter of fear and sense of competition. The question is whether the civil society movement, which obviously is quite strong here, can organise itself in a way that allows it to have a stable influence on Montenegro's politics.

» What is your take on the current situation in the region? What is West Balkans' most serious problem?

I think the region has three major problems.

One is the issue of Kosovo, that is of Kosovo as an independent state that should be involved in the process of European integrations.

The second is Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is obviously not functioning as it should



and is holding the whole region behind.

Third, there is the commonly unconvincing readiness to implement the integration process. There are too many elites and parts of civil society who find the current conditions quite comfortable and have no desire to really change anything and implement the reforms that might eventually undermine their position or impose some control on their activities.

This reluctance of the whole region to fully commit to European integration is something that is our own fault and is bound to have lasting consequences on all of us.

» Why do you think the local elites aren't interested in reforms and societal change? Are they so mired in crime in corruption to be afraid of the consequences, as we saw in Croatia?

Crime is one thing, but another is corruption. In essence, it is a habit of living in disorderly societies where everything is possible but nothing is obligatory.

It's a habit of living in a society without independent judiciary, a habit of living with privileges nobody questions as long as you are mem-

Nikolić with Dačić – a depressing balance

» What do you expect from the rule by Tomislav Nikolić as president and Ivica Dačić as prime minister? What will be the consequences for the region?

I wish it will be government, not rule. These are two different things, but I'm afraid that public offices in this region are understood as a ticket to rule.

For me this is seriously unpleasant. That Europe seems to think we are going back into the 1990s is a view from afar. Close up, however, for us who in the 1990s fought against those who are in power today, the balance is depressing. It shows how much we failed in changing the face of politics and introducing different political standards. Politically, we went back to people who kept Serbia twenty years behind its time. They are back under new names and programmes, which so far are just pieces of paper. All of this already has an effect on the region, there already tensions in the relations with Croatia. Some statements given by Nikolić are far from appropriate.

ber of the ruling structures.

It's a habit of living in a society where knowledge and education aren't a key to success, while party membership is. Serbia has the same problem. Their goal is not to bring some order into society, but to keep everything in the grey zone for as long as they can.

I.P.-V.Ž.



Who goes to important meetings?

On 12 June the Romanian Parliament adopted a declaration according to which the country will be represented by the Prime Minister **Viktor Ponta** at all future meetings of the European Council in Brussels. President **Traian Basescu** has opposed the motion, claiming the sole constitutional right to this function. So far it was always Basescu who participated in the Council's meetings, even if the issues at hand were responsibility of the government. Ponta told the Parliament it was only natural that the Prime Minister should represent the country at the Council meetings which discuss economic or financial issues, which are the prerogative of the Government. According to the Constitution, the President represents Romania in the matters of foreign and security policy. It's therefore natural, the prime minister said, that he should attend only the meetings where such issues are discussed. Basescu retorted that neither the prime minister nor the MPs had "any clue" what the European Council is all about.



By the bag if you think it's worth it

Bulgarian government introduced a tax on plastic bags to reduce their use in shopping and stimulate the shift to bio-degradable bags. The tax will come into force on 1 October. Similar measures have been introduced by other EU members, but so far there is no unified policy in this area. In October 2011 Bulgaria already introduced a fee on the thinnest plastic bags that are the most common, but the measure had no effect, as the shop owners simply replaced them with thicker bags. According to the Bulgarian authorities, the new measure should stimulate the use of cloth and bio-degradable bags. The new tax is equivalent to 0.35 lev or 0.18 euro per bag, and will be gradually increased to 0.55 lev or 0.28 euro by 2014.

15 billion euro compensation

German operators of nuclear power plants are planning to ask for 15 billion euro from the German state for the damages they will suffer because of the country's decision to close down all nuclear reactors in the next ten years. Some of the German public is quite upset by the fact that Germany is taking steps to replace nuclear energy by other sources, while Lithuania is readying to build the first nuclear plant in the Baltic region. After the nuclear disaster in Japan caused by the devastating earthquake, in May 2011 Germany announced it will close all of its nuclear plants by 2022. Out of a total of 17 reactors in Germany, the eight oldest have been closed for good. Another six will be wound down by 2021, while the remaining three, which are the youngest, will remain open for another year. Before deciding to close them down, Germany covered 23% of its energy consumption from these plants.



No more catching up

According to the latest study by the Czech Statistical Office, in the course of the world economic crisis the Czech Republic ceased to converge with the "old" EU members in wealth and living standards, and has not gone back on track since 2009. The crisis didn't have a similar effect on other Central European countries, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary. The Czech Republic joined EU with a per-capita GDP at 68% of EU-15 average. If all 27 EU members were to be taken into account, in 2004 the Czech Republic was at 78% of the all-EU average.



European Parliament backs a set of rules
to improve customers' access to information on bank loans

No more fear over mortgages



In 2009 the mortgage market in EU was worth more than 6 000 billion euro, or 52% of EU's GDP

to present detailed information on home loans for the customers before they can make the decision. "We included a chapter on financial education and requirement of clear information for the customers. We also envisage a "cooling off" period to cancel a mortgage agreement, as well as the opportunity for the customers to get good advice and a fair solution in crisis situation", he added. Sanchez Presedo warns regulating the mortgage market is the first step in the fight against over-indebtedness. "I want to identify risky products and to give power to supervisory authorities to impose extra measures including consumer warnings and stricter prudential requirements so that those taking greater risks also bear the potential costs of those risks". In 2009 the mortgage market in EU was worth more than 6 000 billion euro, or 52% of EU's GDP. Around 70% of all housing in EU is owned by the tenants. Concentration in market for mortgages is high and has been increasing over the recent years. The five largest lenders hold on average 75% of mortgages in each EU member state. The crisis revealed the need for more responsible lending, as well as borrowing: a 2010 survey showed that 50% of all housing loans in 2007 and 2008 were issued without a check on customer's income. The proposal suggests that only customers

Bank customers will have the right to repay a loan early, while lenders can charge a "fair compensation" but not a penalty. Lenders will have to check the creditworthiness of customers and the prospect of them meeting repayments. These are the proposals of the European Parliament, which also asks the banks to simplify the default procedures, so that a buyer in trouble can hand back the keys as repayment. The MEPs also asked for a unified EU-level system of information for the customers, and a more rigorous control of the banks, which until the crisis issued half of the loans without any scrutiny of the customer's creditworthiness. In early June, the Economic and Monetary Committee of the European Parliament adopted a report on better regulation of the mortgage markets by the rapporteur **Antolin Sanchez Presedo**. The report calls on lenders

The crisis revealed the need for more responsible lending, as well as borrowing: a 2010 survey showed that 50% of all housing loans in 2007 and 2008 were issued without a check on customer's income.

with a good credit history, i.e. with ability to repay the loan, should be allowed the mortgage. This would reduce bank's potential losses, as well as the threat of bankruptcy for risky the borrowers. Any financial advice given to borrowers should be impartial, and enable them to understand the long-run financial consequences of taking out the loan. The credit terms offered to borrowers must be in line with their present financial situation and their prospects. Borrowers would also have a 14-day cooling off and reflection period after signing the mortgage deal, during which they could withdraw from it. Costs of early repayment and the currency risk of a foreign currency loan should be the responsibility of the lender, in exchange for a "fair compensation". However, obliging borrowers to pay penalties for early repayment would be prohibited. Proposed rules for loans denominated in a foreign currency would allow the borrower, on certain conditions, to change the currency of the loan, while the lender would be entitled to be compensated for this change. MEPs have also sought for the first time to regulate "tying practices". The legislation would prohibit lenders from making loan offers conditional upon the purchase of insurance or other financial products from a specified provider, although lenders could nonetheless require borrowers to take out an insurance policy with specific characteristics, and refuse the loan if they declined to do so. The reason for banning "tied" products is to make it easier for borrowers to switch providers and increase competition on the mortgage market. Where a borrower has difficulties repaying the loan, MEPs want arrangements to ensure that the lender makes every reasonable effort to solve the problem before initiating foreclosure proceedings. They also aim to ensure that arrangements for settling the debt outstanding after the property has been sold are reasonable with regard to the borrower's circumstances, e.g. family situation. These arrangements could include limiting the seizure of wages, retirement pensions, etc, so as to ensure that the borrower retains a minimum household

The proposal prohibits lenders from making loan offers conditional upon the purchase of insurance or other financial products from a specified provider, to make it easier for borrowers to switch providers and increase competition on the mortgage market.

income. Pursuant a preliminary agreement between the borrower and the lender, the repayment procedure could be even easier: the borrower would hand back the key, thus settling all outstanding debt. Some of the legislation's requirements would be adapted to reflect differences among EU Member States' national mortgage and property markets, but the basic rules would apply EU-wide and information for buyers would have to be presented in a consistent format across the EU. Next, the

Borrowers would also have a 14-day cooling off and reflection period after signing the mortgage deal, during which they could withdraw from it.

Parliament's proposal enters negotiations with EU member states to agree on a final legal text of regulations for the mortgage markets. Until the crisis, many believed that the best place to handle the effects of the crisis is the national level. However, such solutions have proved insufficient, and revealed the need for EU-level guidelines. EU's banking sector is heavily intertwined, and the national legislation is insufficient to tackle the upheavals. Similarly, the crisis revealed a lack of mechanisms to deal with the banks which operate in several EU member states.

Source: EurActiv.com

A predictable, rich life



Milena Šofranac

The author is a student at the Political Science Department of the University of Montenegro and a volunteer in CCE.

Every day we hear something about European integration, and how important and good it is for our country to become a member of the family of nations of European Union. Of course, it all depends on EU's own enlargement policy, as well as on Montenegro's readiness to rise up to the challenges. In all that, we - the citizens - play a very important role. So the first question is: Why do we want to be citizens of EU? EU membership is the final destination for all reforms and efforts at change Montenegro is undertaking today. However, the road to EU is at least as important as the membership itself, because it's on this road that we go through all those changes that really are the stuff of the citizen's desires for EU: stabilization of political and economic situation in the country, and adoption of laws that allow us to apply European standards.

I want to be a citizen of EU, among other, because this community brings a more predictable, richer, safer life, where social integration develops through a host of programmes. This, I believe, is also why so many citizens are in favour of European integration. Simply, when you look at the countries which have already joined the EU, in the previous "waves" of enlargement, they may not be all perfect and there are probably many things their citizens would like to change, but a comfortable everyday life is essential for the European social programme which is an example to the whole world in the matters of social policy. In the more developed EU countries one quarter of the GDP is spent on social integration, and the programmes include the entire society. The results are reflected in the long life expectancy, the most important indicator of development of a social policy in any country. In most EU countries the average life expectancy is above 80 (82 for women and 75 for men), which says a lot about the quality of their everyday lives, preventive healthcare and functioning of the social security. Equality of opportunity and equality before the law are also among the fundamental values of EU,



guaranteed by the principles of freedom, democracy and rule of law. No European citizen can suffer discrimination based on sex, gender, nationality, religion and belief, race, age, education, social status, physical or mental disability etc. All EU citizens are equal before the law.

Among the member states, the principle of equality means that no country can be privileged over others and that natural differences such as the size of the country, size and structure of its population have to be taken into account based on the equality principles. Overall, joining the EU contributes to the spread of equality principle in many areas.

Advantages of the European road will appear to the citizens gradually, as the necessary reforms are implemented to bring us closer to EU, through adoption and implementation of new laws in various fields. The commitment to EU obliges us to take these steps and prevent their fulfilment from becoming hostage to the internal political squabbles. The EU will help us to reform, offering its knowledge and resources. But the greatest advantage of the European road is that it obliges us to follow the reforms that will turn Montenegro into a stable, prosperous and safe country, motivating us to work for our own good.

Europe in my town

At the closing conference “Europe in my town”, organised on 29 June 2012 in Podgorica, representatives of Montenegrin municipalities, civil sector, political parties and the diplomatic corps exchanged their views on the progress of Montenegro's integration, the beginning of accession talks with EU, and discussed the impact of the project “Europe in my town”, implemented by Centre for Civic Education (CCE) in cooperation with the Monitoring Centre (CEMI) and Civic Initiative (CI) from Belgrade, with support of the European Union Delegation to Montenegro. The conference revealed a wide variety of opinions on the models Montenegro applies in its efforts to integrate into EU. In the introduction, **Daliborka Uljarević** stressed the importance of the local communities in the integration process: *“Now that Montenegro is firmly on the way to becoming an EU member, involvement and empowerment of local stakeholders will be crucial for adequate implementation of the upcoming reforms, so that they don't remain merely on paper”*. **Nicola Bertolini**, head of operations at EU Delegation to Montenegro, said this was among the most interesting projects supported by the EU Delegation to Montenegro. **Rajko Golubović**, secretary of the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro, said the opening of negotiations will stimulate further efforts to reach the proper standards in the legislative and other areas. The conference took place on the day Montenegro began its negotiations with EU, and brought together the most relevant guests from all areas of interest to EU integration. Two working sessions: *“Montenegrin municipalities in the process of European integration – where to we stand?”* and *“The role of civil society organisations in the process of European integration – involvement of citizens and other stakeholders, lessons learned and recommendations”*, offered an overview of the situation in Montenegrin municipalities and of the possibilities for further development of cooperation among the stakeholders in order to mobilise all social resources for this complex process. The two sessions included



presentations by **Dejan Mandić**, president of the municipality of Herceg Novi, **Lazar Rađenović**, president of the municipality of Budva, **Radovan Obradović**, deputy president of the municipality of Bijelo Polje, **Džaudet Cakuli**, deputy president of the municipality of Ulcinj, **Marta Šćepanović**, chief administrator of the municipality of Kolašin, **Miljenko Dereta**, founder of the Civic Initiative from Belgrade, **Zlatko Vujović**, president of the Board of Managers of CEMI, **Marina Vuksanović**, president of NGO „Nada” from Herceg Novi, and **Sabina Talović**, executive director of NGO Open Centre „Bona Fide” from Pljevlja. “Europe in my town” aims to strengthen the capacities and role of local communities and civil society organisations in Montenegro, in order to foster their long-term, more effective contribution to the process of EU integration. The overall project strove to improve the level of understanding of EU integration process among the citizens of Montenegro, by creating conditions for their effective participation in public debates and establishing a platform for cooperation between local governments, local civil society organisations and citizens of nine Montenegrin municipalities: Podgorica, Nikšić, Cetinje, Ulcinj, Budva, Herceg Novi, Bijelo Polje, Pljevlja and Kolašin.

D.N.

Eurostat poll ranks Montenegro among the most expensive countries of the region

Clothing prices already at EU levels

On 22 June 2012 Eurostat published a comparison of prices of consumer goods in 37 European countries. The countries surveyed include 27 EU member states, 3 members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) – Iceland, Norway and Switzerland – as well as Croatia, four candidate countries (Montenegro, FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey), Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In 2011, price levels for consumer goods and services differed widely across Europe. Among the EU Member States, in Denmark consumer prices were 42% higher than the EU average, while the cheapest country was Bulgaria (49% below the average). Consumer prices reached 59% of EU 27 average in Montenegro, 74% in Croatia, 57% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 57% in Serbia and 45% in Macedonia.

According to Eurostat, in most categories of basic consumer goods and services Montenegro is still cheaper than most EU member states

The comparison is made based on price level indices in a range of categories of basic goods and services, among which are food and non-alcoholic beverages, alcoholic beverages and tobacco, clothing, footwear, energy (electricity, gas and other fuels), furniture, household appliances, consumer electronics, as well as personal transport equipment, transport services, communication and hotels and restaurants.

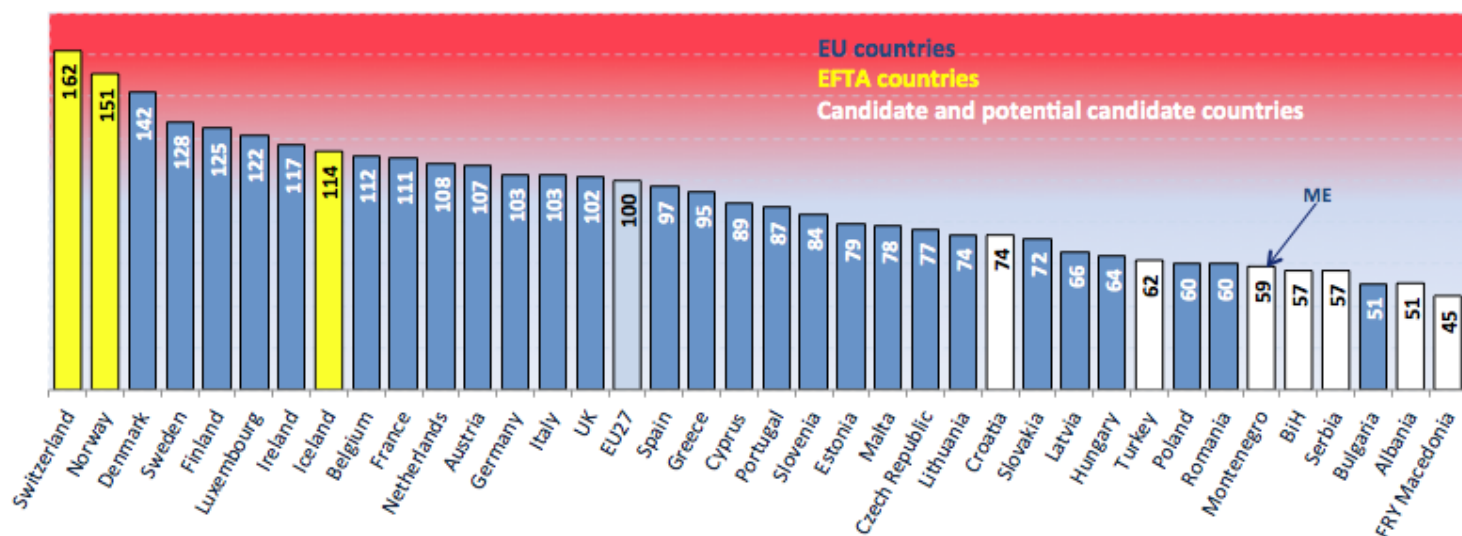
The price level for food and non-alcoholic beverages in Montenegro is at 77% of EU 27 average. Poland, Romania, Latvia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania and Macedonia all have cheaper food than Montenegro.

Norway has the highest price level in this category, as well as in the category of alcoholic drinks and tobacco, at 150% of EU average. The lowest prices are in Macedonia, while in Montenegro they are at 56% of the EU average.

As for clothing, Montenegro is right at the EU average. Even Ireland, Italy, UK and Spain are cheaper in this regard, with 88% of EU27 average. Among the countries of the region, Serbia is slightly more expensive, at 1% higher than the average. The highest prices for clothing are found in Denmark and Switzerland, and the lowest in Turkey, which also has the cheapest footwear. In footwear, Norway tops the list of the most expensive countries, while Montenegro exceeds the EU average by 10%.

Although most citizens of Montenegro complain about electricity and gas prices, Montenegro has the second cheapest energy price





Source: Monstat

Norway is the most expensive country in almost all categories of goods and services, while Switzerland and Denmark lead the table in the categories of clothing and energy. Macedonia is the cheapest country for food, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages and tobacco, Turkey has the cheapest clothing and footwear and Serbia the most affordable electricity. Furniture is the most expensive in Norway and UK are cheapest in Bulgaria

levels of all 37 countries surveys, only ahead of Serbia. In this, Montenegro stands at 54% of EU average, together with Romania. Denmark has the highest price level in energy and gas category.

Furniture and furnishing is also relatively cheaper in Montenegro, at 62% of EU 27 average. The highest price levels are found in Norway and UK, and the lowest in Bulgaria.

Islanders pay the most for their household appliances, while Macedonians pay the least.

Montenegro (83%) and Romania (81%) are right behind Macedonia in this regard. Iceland also has the most expensive consumer electronics, Poland the cheapest, while Montenegro lies more or less at the EU average, with prices similar to Portugal, Germany, Netherlands and Spain. As for the personal vehicles, they are the most expensive in Denmark and the cheapest in Bulgaria. Montenegro is also among the countries with the lowest price tags on cars, right behind Bulgaria.

In the categories of clothing and footwear Montenegro has the price level indices of 100 and 110, making it equally or more expensive than the EU average. Food and non-alcoholic beverages in Montenegro (77%) are more expensive than in Serbia (72%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (75%), and Macedonia (51%), but cheaper than in Croatia, where the prices stand at 92% of EU 27 average. Montenegro's prices of electricity, gas and other fuels are only 54% of EU average



Montenegro's price level indices for household appliances (83), consumer electronics (99) and motor vehicles (84) are close to EU average and not very different from other countries of the region.

Norway has the highest price level in transport services, while Albania has the lowest, at only 42% of the EU average. Montenegro's price index in this category stood at 46% of EU 27 average, just like in Bulgaria and Romania. Spain has the most expensive communication services with 149% of EU average, while Serbia, with 56%, is the cheapest. Montenegro stands at 74% of the EU average in this category, very similar to Estonia. As for hotels and restaurants, the priciest ones are in Norway (184%) and the most affordable in Macedonia (41% of EU 27 average). Montenegro is around 63% of the average. The results above are based on the research conducted within the framework of the Eurostat-OECD PPP (Purchasing Power Parities) programme, which collects data on more than 2400 goods and services in 37 European countries. The results are aggregated into price level indices (PLIs) which allow comparison between different countries and with the EU average. If the price level index is higher than 100, the country concerned

Of the 37 countries included in the research, Iceland has the most expensive household appliances and consumer electronics, while the same categories of products are the cheapest in Poland and Macedonia. According to the data, the highest prices for motor vehicles are found in Denmark, and the lowest in Bulgaria. As for transportation services and hotels and restaurants, Norway is the most expensive in both categories, while the lowest prices are found in Albania and Macedonia. The highest and the lowest price level indices for communication services were recorded in Spain and Serbia, respectively, while Lithuania is the cheapest among the EU members.

may be considered to be relatively expensive compared with the EU average and conversely, if the price level index is lower than 100, then the country is relatively cheap compared with the EU average.

Purchasing power parities are mainly used to compare national aggregates like GDP, but can also be used as currency conversion rates to convert expenditures expressed in national currencies into an artificial common currency, the purchasing power standard.

D.N.

All countries after Montenegro will be much more difficult to integrate due to political constraints in EU

Montenegro like mini-Bulgaria



Dimitar Bečev

Believe it or not there are countries still wishing to join the EU, at a time international financiers are certainly not betting on its health.

Croatia is set to enter on 1 July 2013; Iceland is currently negotiating its accession; and the countries of the Western Balkans are still queuing up to join. If you have to put your money which ex-Yugoslav country will follow Croatia then Montenegro is surely the safest bet.

During a meeting in Luxembourg, the EU's foreign ministers decided to open accession talks with the Balkan republic, and the decision was rubber-stamped at 28 June summit of the European Council. Reflecting the spirit of jubilation, Prime Minister **Igor Lukšić** said this coming Friday, when talks will be officially launched, would be "Montenegro's greatest day". His country could well make it in by the end of the decade if talks move according to the timetable.

It won't be an easy ride. EU member states would need plenty of reassurance that Montenegro would clamp down on corruption and organised crime. For example, the otherwise pro-enlargement Sweden has lately been very critical, with Carl Bildt expressing doubts whether Podgorica had met all the benchmarks – in particular Chapters 23 and 24 ("Judiciary and fundamental rights" and "Justice, freedom and security"). In all fairness, the EU's record in promoting reform is patchy. Membership motivated Croatia to clean up its act and even sentence **Ivo Sanader**, an ex-prime minister, on corruption charges. But elsewhere, notably in 2007 members Romania and Bulgaria, there is widespread scepticism, both internally and in Brussels, as to the effectiveness of the endless stream of anti-graft laws and strategies adopted under the auspices of the EU.

In comparison to the other EU candidates, Serbia and Macedonia, Montenegro looks more like a miniature version of Bulgaria or Romania. Rule of law is a more urgent concern than the usual headaches concerning borders and ethnic balances



And it is hard to see a Montenegrin Sanader coming. Since the end of Yugoslavia Montenegro has been ruled by the same political force: the Democratic Party of Socialists, heir to the local chapter of the League of Yugoslav Communists.

But Montenegro has lots of advantages over its ex-Yugoslav peers. Since 1998 the govern-

ment has followed a consistently pro-Western course. A friendly divorce from elder brother Serbia in 2006 speeded up, as expected, integration into the EU. Other strong points include a small size, even by Balkan standards; the accommodation of minority communities such as Bosnians and Albanians; and the lack of open territorial issues with neighbours (the demarcation of border with Croatia at the Prevlaka peninsula notwithstanding). Montenegro looks more like a miniature version of Bulgaria or Romania, in comparison to the other EU candidates, Serbia and Macedonia. Rule of law is a more urgent concern than the usual headaches concerning borders and ethnic balances. Yet the key question is whether Europe is still a source of stability for the Western Balkans, as it has been since the end of the Kosovo war.

Montenegro, which boomed before the global crisis struck in 2008, is a case in point. Indeed the EU's decision comes a few days after Standard and Poor's downgraded the Balkan republic's sovereign credit rating to BB-, quoting problems in the effort to stabilise government debt, weak growth, and diminishing external flows to the banking system.

Markets are not impressed by the EU's upbeat assessment. In fact, some of the issues are connected to Montenegro's exposure to the EU. The local economy is dependent on FDI (11.9% of GDP in 2011, according to the IMF), with annual inflows halved after 2009. The Western-owned banking system is not extending credit, as in much of the region. Exports are stagnant as the metal industry is in a bad shape. Montenegro adopted unilaterally the euro in 2002 so monetary policy cannot fix that. Tourism seems to be the only growth sector at present. Montenegro is on the edge of recession, with GDP set to rise by only 0.5% in 2012. The government is struggling to rein in public debt of 47% of GDP, as well as a soaring deficit. After two years of modest recovery the euro zone crisis is now being felt acutely across Europe's marches. The challenges faced

EU's decision to begin negotiations comes a few days after the international credit agencies downgraded Montenegro's sovereign credit rating to BB-, quoting problems in the effort to stabilise government debt, weak growth, and diminishing external flows to the banking system.

by Montenegro are a thought-provoking reminder of how well the Europeanisation of the Balkans has fared.

The regions' preoccupations mirror those of the EU. Montenegro is not exceptional. Serbia's incoming government has to implement the tough belt-tightening measures required by the Stand-By Agreement signed with the IMF in 2009. The regional frontrunner Croatia is heading for recession in 2012 with the economy projected to shrink by 0.2%.

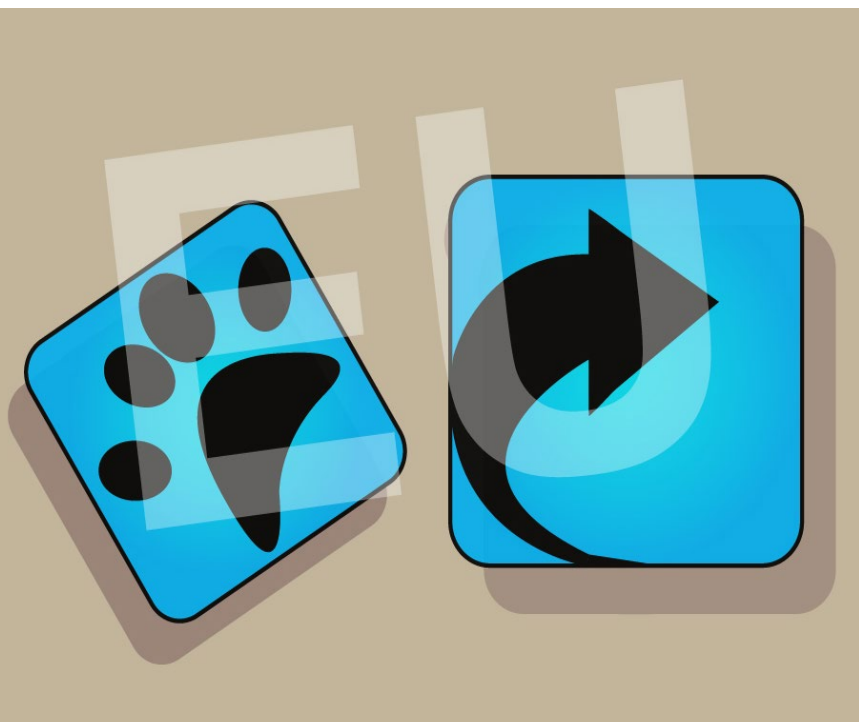
Slow or negative growth resulting in growing unemployment dilutes EU's famed transformative power as it increases the costs of reform on the path to membership. Thus far the region has remained stable, averting a Greek scenario. But as the Economist Intelligence Unit put it in a recent analytical piece, this stability might prove deceptive. If the euro zone plunges into recession there will be little hope left for the Western Balkan periphery.

The truth is that all countries after Montenegro will be much more difficult to integrate. It is hard to see another Western Balkan country making rapid progress on the accession track, although Serbia has built considerable momentum. For a long time economics provided a welcome cure to the pathologies of local politics. Hopefully it will stay like that. Or else the EU itself will prove to be enlargement policy's most formidable enemy.

Source: www.ecfr.eu

What we need to know before we decide to join European Union

EU for citizens



Direktive, uredbe, aquis communitare, Savjet EU, poglavlja, screening, ...Koliko građana Crne Gore, ali i većine država koje pretenduju da postanu članice EU ili onih koji su u EU, razumiju ili poznaju ovu terminologiju?

Suštinski, za život su bitna potpuno druga pitanja od poznavanja uglavnom nezaobilaznih birokratskih termina, kao ona o uslovima rada u EU, cijenama, veličini voća, vozačkim dozvolama, školama,... Zbog toga Evropski puls objavljuje odgovore na pitanja bitna za svakodnevni život, a koja bi građanima Crne Gore trebala da približe Uniju.

Can pets travel abroad in European Union?

They can, if they have a European passport for pets, except to the UK, which has different rules about the entry of animals to its territory. The European pet passport is valid for cats, dogs and ferrets and needs to contain information about vaccinations. For other animals, national legislation applies. Transport of endangered species is subject to special supervision.

How can one check if a certain producer applied adequate environmental standards?

“Ecolabel” is the EU certificate issued since 1992 to the providers of goods and services who comply with the environmental standards. Known as the “green flower” the label can be found on product packaging. The label has to be renewed every three years. The criteria that qualify a provider for the Ecolabel are extremely stringent, and derived from scientific research on environmental impact, from the extraction of raw materials to production, sale and disposal of the product. Ecolabel doesn't apply to the products related to food, drinks, pharmaceuticals and medical equipment.



How strict are EU's sanctions against pollution?

Very. The European Commission demands that the member states transpose all EU directives on environment and implement them within the national jurisdiction. The directives contain detailed descriptions of activities that are subject to sanctions for violating environmental norms. Should the member states fail to implement the directives within the given deadline, the Commission can refer the case to the European Court of Justice, resulting in financial sanctions for the non-complying member states.



How does EU protect the natural sources of drinking water?

Protection of ground and coastal water resources, and especially drinking water, is the basis of environmental protection in EU. In order to protect human health and ensure access to drinking water to all EU citizens, the Directive on drinking water requires all member states to monitor water quality via 48 microbiological and chemical indicators, conduct regular checks and inform the public about the quality of water. Every three years the member states should submit information on water quality to the European Commission, to be published on its website.

What are the incentives for the use of solar energy?

EU's incentives for research and development of projects on photocells have been in place for more than 30 years. Between 2003 and 2006 the 6th EU Framework Programme for research and technological development allocat-

ed more than 100 million euro to solar energy research, and the trend continued under the 7th FP currently in place. Several EU directives have been adopted regulating the use of renewable energy sources. The directives date from 2001, 2003 and 2009 and recommend financing of such projects through structural funds. Today some 35 billion euro are spent every year in EU on renewable energy projects, including both national and EU programmes. This reduced the costs of solar energy production by 60% in the last nine years. EU is committed to increasing the share of renewable energy in total consumption to 20% by 2020.

Do all member states recognize same-sex marriage?

Registered partnerships which can also be made between people of the same sex exist in Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Hungary, Slovenia and UK. However, the rights and obligations contained in the institution of registered partnership vary between the member states.

Is there such a thing as reduced years of service in EU? How much is an average EU pension?

Every EU member decides on its own age limit for retirement. The amount of pension depends on the contributions during the working years. An average pension in 2007 was between 3 000 euro per year in Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, Letonia and Estonia, and 14 000 in Austria, Denmark, France, Luxembourg and Sweden. The minimum pension also varies depending on a range of factors such as inflation, standard of living, wage growth, gross national income... Reduced years of service are relatively rare in EU labour regulations, and high-risk jobs are usually compensated by higher wages and special insurance arrangements.

Source: "101 question on EU's influence on the lives of citizens", published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integrations of Croatia – www.mvpei.hr

Panel discussion at the Legal Department (University of Montenegro)

On 21.06.2012 in the Celebratory hall of the Legal Department of the University of Montenegro, Centre for Civic Education (CCE) organised, in cooperation with ELSA Montenegro, a panel discussion titled *"Judiciary and fundamental rights"*. The discussion was part of the project *"Europe in my town"* organised by Centre for Civic Education (CCE) in cooperation with the Monitoring Centre (CEMI) from Podgorica and Civic Initiative from Belgrade, with support of EU Delegation in Montenegro. Speakers at the panel were: Prof Dr. **Snežana Miladinović** from the Legal Department, **Daliborka Uljarević**, executive director of CCE, **Svetlana Rajković**, deputy Minister for Justice and Human Rights and the main negotiator for Chapters 23 and 24, **Branka Lakočević**, deputy Minister for Justice and Human Rights and the head of the working group in charge of preparing the negotiating position on Chapter 23, and **Boris Marić**, senior legal advisor to CCE and civil society representative in the working group for negotiations on the Chapter 23.

XIV generation of Human Rights School completes the programme

On 15.06.2012, participants of the XIV Human Rights School received their diplomas at a ceremony in the Centre for Civic Education (CCE). The school took place during May 2012, and was organised by CCE with support of the Norwegian Foreign Affairs Ministry through the programme *"Education for human rights and active citizenship in the Western Balkans"*. During the intensive programme of the Human Rights School the students had a chance to participate in interactive presentations and workshops and learn about different aspects of human rights, from the concept, culture and principles of human rights, to detailed analysis of documents, standards and recommendations of the international organisations in the field of human rights. They also learned about the mechanism and instruments of human rights protection in Montenegro and internationally, and had an overview of the state of human rights in Montenegro today. The lecturers at the School were professors of the University of Montenegro and other universities in the region, representatives of non-governmental organisations, human rights activists and representatives of institutions responsible for human rights in Montenegro. The XIV generation of the Human Rights School was successfully completed by 20 young people, students of the gymnasium "Slobodan Škerović" and scholarship recipients of the Roma Scholarship Foundation. In the course of the last 13 generations, more than 350 citizens completed the School: members of political parties, non-governmental organisations, employees of public institutions on the local and the national level, journalists, students, and others who expressed an interest in being active in the public sphere and contribute to the promotion of human and minority rights in Montenegro. The diplomas were awarded by **Daliborka Uljarević**, CCE executive director.

NGO monitoring coalition for negotiations visits Zagreb

As part of the joint project *"Transferring the knowledge and experience of Croatian NGOs in monitoring EU accession negotiations"*, Centre for Peace Studies in cooperation with the Centre for Development of Non-Governmental Organisations (CDNGO) organised a study visit to Zagreb for representatives of Montenegro NGOs, between 28.05. until 01.06.2012. Visiting NGOs are part of a coalition established to monitor accession negotiations within Chapter 23. The goal of the visit was to share the experiences and knowledge of the Croatian NGOs, Government and EU Delegation to Croatia on the content, structure and monitoring of the Croatian accession talks with EU. The study visit resulted in the following main conclusions: NGO capacities ought to be sufficiently developed to allow them to actively participate in the negotiation process; NGOs should develop good relations with the media; NGOs should also work on improving cooperation with the embassies, especially of EU member states, regularly inform them about their activities, invite them to all events, etc; the results of the Coalition should be made available to all contacts in EU Delegation to Montenegro, European Commission and the embassies, as well as to the European Council; the best timing for the Coalition reports would be March and September. Montenegrin representatives on the study visits were: **Ana Vujošević**, Center for Civic Education (CGO), **Ljiljana Raičević**, Safe Women's House (SWH), **Ana Selić**, Monitoring Centre (CEMI), **Biljana Alković**, Roma Scholarship Foundation (RSF), **Zdravko Cimbalević**, LGBT Forum Progress, **Jovana Marović**, Institute Alternative (IA), **Marija Vuksanović**, Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM), **Maja Raičević**, Center for Women's Rights, **Milan Šaranović**, Anti-discrimination centre EKVISTA, **Marina Vujačić**, Association of Young People with Disabilities (UMHCG), **Danijel Kalezić**, Youth Cultural Centre Juventas, **Tin Deljanin**, European Movement in Montenegro (EMiM), **Marina Vuković**, Centre for Development of Non-Governmental Organisations (CDNGO) and **Lidija Knežević**, CDNGO.

Training for young politicians

Between 31.05 and 02.06.2012 in Bečići Friedrich Ebert and Alfred Mozer foundations, together with European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity organised the first segment of the regional “*Course for promising politicians 2012*”, focusing on the concept of social democracy, its policies, basic ideas and message of the social-democratic thought, as well as the challenges it is currently facing. Executive director of Centre for Civic Education (CCE) **Daliborka Uljarević** talked about the political situation in Montenegro from the perspective of the civil sector, which is a vital part of the Montenegrin critical public. The seminar was attended by representatives of political parties and non-governmental organisations from Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, Croatia and Albania. Among the panellists were **Michael Ehrke**, director of the regional office of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, **René Cuperus**, director of the social-democratic think-tank International Relations Wiardi Beckman Stichting from the Netherlands and **Milan Živković**, secretary of the National Political Committee and director of the Political Academy in Croatia.

Participants from the region visit CCE

On 12.06.2012 CCE hosted a delegation of 8 high school teachers and 18 students from Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo, and introduced them to CCE's work. The visit was part of the “Women's diary of change” project, financed by the European Commission and implemented in Montenegro by the Institute for Media. The project aims to empower young women to become active participants in their socio-political environment, and to transform their newly acquired knowledge into concrete action. On the one hand, the purpose of the visit to Montenegro was to collect information about the role of local NGOs and their active participation in societal transformation, and on the other hand to receive training that enables them to successfully apply with projects for international funding. The participants were welcomed by **Daliborka Uljarević**, executive director of the Centre for Civic Education, and were introduced to the mission and work of CCE by **Mirela Rebronja**, programme coordinator, and **Chiara Gaia Iascone**, programme associate, who also answered their questions about CCE's impact on Montenegro's society, and about the state of human rights in the country.

Balkans and Europe

On 27.05.2012, in Belgrade, Centre for Foreign Policy and Friedrich Ebert Foundation organised the conference “*Western Balkans and European (dis)integration*”, in order to discuss the prospects of European integration in the Balkans. The conference consisted of two panels: “*Crisis in the European Union and the future of Eurozone*”, and “*The rest of the Balkans in EU's waiting room*”. The participants had a chance to exchange their experience with the European integration process and the ways in which countries in different stages of accession can harmonize their policies with the European ones. CCE's senior legal advisor, **Boris Marić**, represented Centre for Civic Education at the conference.

Learning democracy

With a diploma award ceremony on 23.06.2012, XIX generation of Democracy School successfully completed the programme. Democracy School is organised by Centre for Civic Education (CCE), with support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES). The diplomas were awarded by **Prof Dr Radovan Radonjić**, head of the School, **Daliborka Uljarević**, executive director of CCE, and **Ivana Račić**, FES programme coordinator. During 4 months of active learning, 31 participants have successfully completed the programme, designed to offer socially active citizens a chance to expand and advance their knowledge through lectures by renowned professors and experts from various academic and other institutions and organisations from Montenegro and abroad. The goal of the school was to educate and inform the participants about democracy, its values and methods and contribute to raising the level of general culture in Montenegro. Among the participants were mostly activists of non-governmental organisations and political parties, journalists, employees of local administrations and ministries, students and others. The diplomas were awarded to: **Aleksandar Nikčević**, **Aleksandar Tošić**, **Aleksandar Bošković**, **Ana Đurković**, **Ana Vukčević**, **Anja Đonković**, **Bojan Zlatičanin**, **Darka Kostić**, **Dejan Jakanović**, **Denis Mekić**, **Fahreta Tahirović**, **Haris Demić**, **Ivan Blagojević**, **Ivana Mitrović**, **Ivana Vujović**, **Ivona Vuković**, **Jelena Radunović**, **Koviljka Gluščević**, **Lidija Pejović**, **Marija Radunović**, **Maja Darmanović**, **Milica Petričević**, **Zlata Pelević**, **Miloje Knežević**, **Mirna Samardžić**, **Nataša Leković**, **Nenad Čelebić**, **Radomir Radonjić**, **Tamara Bjelica**, **Vidak Latković** and **Žarko Petrović**.

10th International Youth Conference “European Values for the Future of the Southeastern European Countries”

Youth Alliance Krusevo in cooperation with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, supported by Stability Pact for SEE – sponsored by Germany, is organizer of the 10th anniversary International Youth Conference “*EUROPEAN VALUES FOR THE FUTURE OF SOUTHEASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES*”. Aim is to gather 55 participants from: Macedonia (host country), Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Kosovo, Italy, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Turkey coming from experienced NGO's, institutions or youth organizations.

This year Conference that will take place from 21 until 25 September 2012 in Krushevo, in Macedonia will provide an opportunity for discussions and reflections of the role of youth in achieving the EU values in their societies in SEE and developing recommendations and proposals for further youth actions for promotion of EU values among young people in Europe and particularly in SEE.

Deadline: 15 September, 2012

For application please visit: <http://www.krusevoconference.org.mk/application.php> where you will find the application form, and other useful information about the conference.

For any questions contact the organisers via <http://www.krusevoconference.org.mk/> or Facebook: International Youth Conference – Krusevo 2012, <http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/442742002417652/>

Publisher: Centre for Civic Education (CCE)

EIC Bulletin - European pulse - is electronic magazine publicized

with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. It is registered in the Ministry of Culture as item No. 578

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Production: identity & promotion

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European Pulse can be downloaded at the www.cgo-cce.org every last Friday in the month.