

CIVIC

Second fiddle

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We have entered the 2009 without a dilemma. Deputy Prime Minister Đurović is not there to defend Montenegro's interests but only the interests of a handful of families who are ruling the country to their own benefit and who believe themselves to be the state. Instead of the promising lead role in this decisive process for Montenegro, she has agreed to play the second fiddle and invested in it everything she ever had.

Deputy Prime Minister for European Integrations **Gordana Đurović** tried once again to present to us our everyday lives in a peachy light, garnished with unseemly accusations against those who see Montenegro differently from that narrow circle whose views she is eagerly upholding. It is good that she came out in the media with those thoughts that she already expressed before abusing university halls and other similar spaces. By displaying her personal incapacity to cope with critique as a constructive contribution to Montenegro's road to EU, she tore apart the illusion of her being ready to cooperate with genuine NGOs or those who disagree with the party line and demonstrated the high degree of unity within the party and the Government when it comes to dealing with those of a different opinion.

Deputy Prime Minister entered the Montenegrin political scene as a rarely unbesmirched name of this government, a diligent expert with experience also in the civil sector projects and was recognised as such and positively acclaimed both in the country and abroad. She struggled hard to gain the adequate support for this process in Montenegro at the time when most politicians had no clue of what she was talking about, while at the same time putting up a good fight for the better place for Montenegro in negotiations on the Stabilisation and Association Agreement in Europe. Defending her position with expertise, working hard, with more energy and dedication than most of the members of the Government put together, her figure and attitude promised the introduction of European-style practice and commanded undivided support. But it all perhaps seemed too good to be true.

It was not rational to expect that the free-minded NGO activists would ignore her distancing from the profession and her ambitions to strengthen her position within the party, forgetting the basis that made her strong in the first place, that managed to win the sympathies of different actors and made the entire process credible. The NGOs offered well-intended criticism of those things that were not going so well in the country so that everybody would know what ought to be fixed. She ignored them stubbornly, slowly losing her prestige on the domestic scene and in the international circles. She did not know or did not want to see these warning signals and on several (un)official occasions she reacted with emotion, with anger and in a manner inappropriate for her position, her expertise and the European principles she pledged to aim for. She reacted in a similar way to the statements of some ambassadors of EU member states.

Deputy Prime Minister is a textbook example of how impossible it is to change this system from the inside as long as this crowd is at the helm. It swallows you or you let yourself be swallowed is a matter of nuances with regard to the final result, which is also the worst outcome for Montenegro.

So instead of interpreting the complex process of EU enlargement in her University lectures, she prefers to dedicate that time to discrediting the NGOs which work conscientiously on bringing to the Montenegrin

society not only the general knowledge of EU and the standards set in the *acquis communautaire*, but also the most urgently needed values. From the authority position of a professor, in front of students who are paying to learn about the EU, she presents the views of one particular political option and uses the time which was intended to spread to knowledge to spread the party propaganda and negative views on the work of NGOs and other dissenters. In this way, she (un)consciously demonstrates her own lack of understanding or forgetfulness of the core of the process of European integrations, since we all know that the EU rests on the civil dialogue, communication and cooperation with the civil society, and there is no excuse for the Deputy Prime Minister for trying to discredit this sector in front of any audience, and especially by abusing the academic arena.

In Montenegro, the ruling circles have long tried to push through the false argument that the process of European integrations is something completely different from societal democratisation. In other words, European integrations are supposed to be something abstract, and the daily examples of violations of the rule of law by powerful individuals, the plunder of state property, abuse of office and competences etc. have nothing to do with it. Deputy Prime Minister is an eager advocate of this same thesis although she should know better than anybody else that the process of European integrations is nothing but a transformation of Montenegro into a society of freedom, good living standards, stable institutions, equality before the law, market economy and accountability of decision-makers – which are all fundamental values of the EU.

European affairs are domestic affairs that ought to be sorted out for ourselves and not just to please Brussels. These are the thoughts and words of all those who really want to see Montenegro progress. And this is what bothers those who set their personal interests ahead of the public ones, as well as those (un)willing spokespersons of such particularistic interests that managed to harness expertise to serve theirs and not the goals of all citizens.

Instead of fighting for the implementation of every single European value and standard, the Deputy Prime Minister remains silent before all obstacles that stand on our road to EU and tries to sidetrack the conversation. She is loud when she tries to defend the indefensible, the issues that have already been the target of criticism by EU institutions, international organisations and local NGOs but she never questions the dominant projects of the powerful against the public good.

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The author is the Executive director of the Centre for Civic Education