

European pulse

Electronic monthly magazine for European integration

No 115, April 2015

FOCUS OF THIS ISSUE

How the EC president Jean Claude Juncker was "impressed" with the progress of Montenegro

Interview

President of Parliamentary Committee for Anti-corruption
Predrag Bulatović

Challenges in the EU

Initiative for infrastructural connecting of
the Balkans



Foreword: Parade



Vladan Žugjić

After the last September summit of the North Atlantic Alliance in Wales, it was clear that 2015 will be marked by a campaign for NATO integration, but even for Montenegro it was hard to predict the forms this would take. Once it became clear that the USA and the EU would take the presence of the Montenegrin President **Filip Vujanović** at military parade on the Red square as an expression of support to **Vladimir Putin**, Montenegrin government suddenly remembered that it ought to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the victory against fascism at home. A more emancipated government would have thought of its anniversaries on its own. Montenegro was after all, the home to the first organised struggle against Hitler's coalition in Europe. With all due respect for the fact that Soviet Union had sustained the highest number of casualties in the World War II, it is also a fact that the Red Army did not play a role in the liberation of Montenegro. In the end, having first promised to attend the parade in Moscow, Vujanović stayed in Podgorica, and Montenegro embarrassed itself.

At the same time, those in politics and the civil society who are the heirs of the policy against which Moscow and the Red Army fought 70 years ago, seem to be showing both platonic and material love for Russia. The main argument of their anti-NATO campaign is emotion and remembrance of the NATO bombing of FRY in 1999. Had more of those factors shown the same emotion for the victims in Srebrenica, or if Russia, where the opposition is as marginalised as the opposition in Montenegro, raised its voice even once to call for the fight against corruption and organised crime in Montenegro, freedom of the media and rule of law, their case for considering an alternative to NATO membership would have been stronger. True, former Russian owner of KAP-CAEC recently complained about the rule of law, but until it was broken he never seemed to mind the non-transparency of the agreement he had with Government.

Or, if this is about emotions, ask yourselves the question, where would you rather want your children to study, or where should the people from north of Montenegro, an area economically devastated by this government, seek a better future - in NATO/EU member states or in the East?

And what does NATO have to do with the EU? Fine, NATO's sieve is less fine-grained than that of the EU, but nevertheless 22 out of 28 NATO states of NATO are also members of EU. That should mean something.

Calendar

- 5 April **Government shows concern for the Saline after the pressure from ambassadors** / The Government will provide financing for the running of desalination pumps in the Ulcinj saline and oblige the Municipality of Ulcinj to permanently prohibit hunting and fishing on the territory of the saline, in order to protect biodiversity as well as the area which is precious to the country. This solution was rushed in after the pressure from the EU and from ambassadors of France, Poland and Germany - **Veronique Brumeaux**, **Grazina Sikorska** and **Gudrun Stainacker**, who urged Montenegrin officials in a joint statement to address the situation in the saline, as the current state of affairs is likely to damage Montenegro's reputation and jeopardise negotiations for EU accession.
- 14 April **Tusk wants tangible results on the rule of law** / President of European Council **Donald Tusk** said that Montenegro needs to show tangible results on the rule of law front. After meeting the Prime Minister **Milo Đukanović** in Brussels, he said that the EU is committed to Montenegro's membership of EU, and that he expects the Government's commitment to European objectives.
- 23 April **Government: We keep making progress towards the EU** / College for accession negotiations, chaired by Prime Minister Milo Đukanović, concluded that Montenegro has been making continuous progress towards the EU.
- 24 April **Drobnić: EU is like a moving target, you always have to move faster** / Head of the EU Delegation to Montenegro **Mitja Drobnić** said that Montenegrin Government, Parliament and economic actors should allocate more rationally the energy they put into European integration. "With regard to the process of negotiations and accession, and the conditions that have to be met on this way, the EU can be viewed as a "moving target". The accession countries should therefore "move faster than the target", in order to successfully participate in the process of European integration", Drobnić said during lecture at the Faculty for Administrative and European Studies.

Is Montenegro the good pupil?



By: Terry Reintke
The author is a Member of
the European Parliament

In April the Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee (SAPC) between the EU and Montenegro met in Budva and Podgorica to find the answer to the question: Is Montenegro the good pupil in the West Balkans?

The representatives of the European Parliament wanted to discuss topics such as the fight against corruption, the rights of people with disabilities, LGBTQ issues, rule of law and the sustainability of infrastructure projects in Europe's only constitutionally ecological state. Already after the first day one thing became very clear: We had asked the wrong question.

Montenegro is a transition society facing many challenges: The socio-economic situation is dire, inequality is omnipresent, democratic institutions are in a process of development and the implementation of laws is very often challenging.

Still compared to many other countries in the Western Balkans Montenegro is very often seen as the most likely candidate to join the EU in the upcoming years. Montenegro has played a role as mediator between the different sides in the region trying to enhance regional cooperation, the country is "stable" as we were reminded many times and small enough to be manageable.

And indeed there are things happening: Freedom of the media seems to be put on the agenda, although the 2015 World Press Freedom Index still ranked Montenegro 114th out of 180 countries. There are also efforts to improve the human rights situation, numerous anti-corruption laws have been adopted since the beginning of 2015, and theoretically all public buildings have to be accessible for people with disabilities (the reality looks very different).

Corruption – The number 1 topic

Corruption – both in the political and the economic field – is the topic in Montenegro. DPS has been ruling the country for the last 25 years. Observers agree that this has led to a tight network of businesspeople, investors and politicians around Prime Minister **Milo Đukanović** taking a firm grip of Montenegro. The power of this network has been confirmed repeatedly in various political areas. Currently a salt factory in Ulcinj, the saline, is the cause of a lot of criticism. Due to minimal debts the company was privatised for 400.000 euro a few years ago. The factory area is home to a bird reserve and many of the Albanian speaking inhabitants of Ulcinj worked

there. After declaring bankruptcy, the investors now wish to construct a hotel complex on the ground. The first offers that were published by the alleged owner, the investment fund, are sums of around 150 million euro. But the citizens strike back. During our visit of the saline, trade unions, environmental organisation, the mayor of Ulcinj, anti-corruption NGOs, as well as citizens of the city strongly emphasized that they will not accept an enrichment of private investors at the expense of the people, the environment and rule of law. It is important that we continue to build a societal environment which allows for the empowerment of such citizens initiatives.

LGBTQ – A long way to go

"I don't mind gays personally, but why do they constantly have to talk about their sexuality?", says a journalist to me as he sees me with a gay friend of mine who is a well-known LGBTQ activist. Homophobia remains to be a common fear and people who have their coming out are faced with severe discrimination – even up to the point of physical attacks. Just one evening before I met with this journalist I was affected by such an attack myself. The situation of LGBTQ persons is one of the major indicators when it comes to the openness of a society. We have to be very clear here: every person needs to have the right to live her or his life in the way they choose to. We have to take a determined stance in the fight against prejudices and homophobia.

So, what's the question then - is Montenegro the good pupil in the Western Balkans? Are we as parliamentarians going there to check how much work the government has put into passing the exam called "accession"?

Nonsense. Because if we ask this question, both the EU and the Montenegrin government have essentially misunderstood the actual matter: This process of achieving rule of law, of strengthening democratic decision-making or fighting against homophobia is neither anything that the government should do for passing any test nor for making the EU happy – nor for impressing a bunch of MEPs travelling to Montenegro.

It is something that the Montenegrin citizens deserve. Not out of altruism or charity. These principles – be it a fair and free election, be it gender equality, be it civil liberties – are the basic rights that the people in Montenegro hold.

Source: www.europeanwesternbalkans.com

The Government paraphrases the assessment by Jean Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission, on Montenegro's "impressive" progress

Propaganda instead of tangible results



By: Svetlana Pešić

The recent visit by the Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Đukanović to Brussels would most likely have passed as a regular foreign policy activity of a high state official had the Government of Montenegro not announced on its website that the president of European Commission (EC) Jean Claude Juncker "said that the EC was impressed with the progress Montenegro made in the process of European integration" and that "Montenegro has achieved impressive economic progress and stability of public finances".

This alleged assessment of the president of EC provoked unprecedented reactions in the Montenegrin public, accustomed to the moderate praise and criticism from EU officials, usually due to the lack of progress on the rule of law.

The vice president of United Reform Action (URA) and independent MP Dritan Abazović pointed out that Juncker's statement is absolutely incompatible with EC progress reports on Montenegro, and that even the Montenegrin Minister of Finance would deny that Montenegro achieved stability of public finances. Thus, Abazović said, "either Montenegro is utterly irrelevant to Europeans or Juncker met with the Montenegrin Prime Minister completely unprepared".

Miodrag Lekić, leader of DEMOS, also responded to Juncker's statement, asking the EU Delegation to Montenegro and its head Mitja Drobnič to explain whether the statement of the president of EC, as released by the Montenegrin Government, is authentic, saying he has doubts given the "confirmed tendency of the government's propaganda stations" to "manipulate and twist facts".

"EU Delegation in Podgorica has a duty to respond to this query, given the high level of

"The greater the problems facing other countries of the region in their preparation for EU membership, the more difficult their situation, the more the EU officials tout Montenegro as a good example and their statements are full of optimism about Montenegro's progress. In this context, what happens in Montenegro matters the least for such assessments. The Government of Montenegro and the ruling party always seek to disclose only those parts of conversations and statements by European officials that are positive about the government's efforts and paint it in the best possible light", Stevo Muk said.

interest in the Montenegrin public, and the nearly unbelievable, almost scandalous content of this message. Explanation is also needed because of the inconvenient fact that the said statement unexpectedly put a question mark over the credibility of EU institutions among our citizens, as well as over the seriousness of the integration process in which the Montenegrin citizens have so far very highly valued the role of the EU", Lekić said.

Meanwhile, German ambassador to Montenegro Gudrun Steinacker said that Juncker's statement on how impressed he was with Montenegro's progress was primarily intended for the European public, in order to persuade it to continue with enlargement process.

The EU Delegation reacted to the calls by posting an announcement from Juncker's office on its website, which shows that the Government failed to transmit Juncker's words correctly, leaving out the part of the statement which says that "visible results, especially in the area of judiciary, will be of key importance for future progress". Drobnič, who was placed in an unpleasant situation by these developments,

told journalists that statements of high EC officials have to be read carefully because "they are sometimes very precise, thus one has to pay attention to all elements contained in those statements".

"One should know the difference between negotiations and the process of European integration. At the end of the negotiations the countries sign the accession treaty, which stipulates the conditions under which the country joins the EU. At the end of the European integration process the country has fulfilled all the membership criteria and the next step is the accession to the EU", Drobnič said. The Government had said Juncker was "impressed" with Montenegro's progress in the EU integration process, whereas the announcement that came from his office said he "commended" the progress in negotiations. "Juncker's statement was not aimed at the Government or the opposition, it was simply aimed at the state of Montenegro. Montenegro's achievements are not only due to the efforts of the Government, but also to those of the parliament, which consists of both the government and the opposition", Drobnič said.



Stevo Muk

President of the Managing board of Institute Alternative Stevo Muk told European pulse that the EU and EC officials, are continuing the

Daliborka Ujharević believes that Juncker's statement can be regarded as an encouragement for Montenegrin institutions to continue the hard, demanding and uncertain work towards the EU. "However, that does not give the government officials, and especially the Prime Minister, the right to use the statement of the president of EC for propaganda purposes".

usual practice of combining commendations and calls to action.

"The greater the problems facing other countries of the region in their preparation for EU membership, the more difficult their situation, the more the EU officials taut Montenegro as a good example and their statements are full of optimism about Montenegro's progress. In this context, what happens in Montenegro matters the least for such assessments", Muk said.

According to him, the Government of Montenegro and the ruling party always seek to disclose only those parts of conversations and statements by European officials that are positive about the government's efforts and paint it in the best possible light. "Unfortunately in this they are often aided by the practice of European officials not to give official statements after such meeting and to leave out

Communication of the Public Relations Bureau of the Government of Montenegro

Prime Minister of Montenegro Milo Đukanović started his official visit to Brussels by meeting with the European Commission's President Jean-Claude Juncker.

During his first meeting with Prime Minister Đukanović ever since he took over the Commission's reins, President Juncker noted that the European Commission is impressed by the track record Montenegro has developed on its European path, particularly referring to the country's economic progress and stability of public finance. The meeting also emphasised that Montenegro's commitment to promoting the rule of law and freedom of the media is encouraging.

Prime Minister Milo Đukanović expressed his satisfaction with the meeting and the reception in the European Commission, and said that the Government of Montenegro is devoted to pursuing reforms and conducting negotiations on Montenegro's accession to the European Union. In that context, he welcomed the European Commission's commitment to supporting the open door policy for the Western Balkans. Montenegro's Prime Minister reiterated the importance of developing infrastructure links in the region and with the European Union, as well as the overall economic development for further integration and progress.

Communication from Juncker's office



President Juncker met with Prime Minister of Montenegro Milo Đukanović. This was the President's first meeting with the Prime Minister as President of the European Commission. They discussed the accession process. President Juncker was impressed by Montenegro's progress in the accession negotiations. He also stressed that tangible results, notably in the judicial area, will be essential for further progress. President Juncker recalled that legal certainty and an effective judicial system in terms of independence, efficiency and quality are necessary not only in the context of the accession process, but that they are also preconditions for attracting investment, improving competitiveness and stimulating growth and jobs. They also discussed the freedom of the press. President Juncker welcomed recent efforts to address open cases of violence against journalists but urged Prime Minister Đukanović to ensure these investigations are completed and to continue the dialogue on this matter with the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

the more contested parts of the discussion from their diplomatically phrased communications”, Muk said.

In any case, says Muk said, following the reaction of the Montenegrin public to the Government's recent announcement, president of EC ought to clarify his views and statements that were, unfortunately, published and interpreted by the Government of Montenegro instead of the EC.

"Statements made in relation to Montenegro or any other candidate country are obviously never heard only by the European public, but also by the public of the country the statement refers to. It is therefore important that the statements of European officials should always reflect both the progress and the challenges, as well as efforts of all parties: not just the government, but also the opposition, as well as the civil society", Muk told.



Daliborka Uljarević

Executive director of the Centre for Civic Education (CCE) Daliborka Uljarević believes that Juncker's statement can be regarded as an encouragement for Montenegrin institutions to continue with their hard, demanding and uncertain work

in order to achieve the necessary standards that will guarantee Montenegro's success in negotiations with the EU.

"However, that does not give the government officials, and especially not the Prime Minister, the right to use the statement of the president of EC for propaganda purposes. That is not good for the negotiation process nor for the genuine attainment of tangible results, and finally and most importantly, the propagandist method is not in the public interest of Montenegro", Uljarević told European pulse.

According to her, an objective and reasoned relation with the public, refusal to resort to propaganda and turning to precise problem analysis accompanied by recommended solutions and personal accountability for implementation would give us the hope that our decision makers have become more direct and that the quality and pace of reforms will increase. "Instead, on the official website of the Government of Montenegro we can only see empty satisfaction with what was already achieved, without reference to a single problem. Practicing power is not only exercise in persuasion, but concrete work on resolving accumulated problems with a clear attribution of responsibility", Uljarević said.

Predrag Bulatović, president of the Committee for Anti-corruption tells *European Pulse*

Authorities can hardly avoid criminalization of illegal enrichment

Predrag Bulatović, president of the Committee for Anti-corruption, told *European pulse* that it will be very hard for the authorities to entirely avoid criminal sanctioning of public officials who enriched themselves illegally, as suggested by the European Commission.

» Do you think that the Government will agree to criminalise illegal enrichment, given that its officials as well as the highest ranks of judiciary were either against that proposal or abstained?



Predrag Bulatović

Several years ago, the Government hired an expert of the European Commission to look into the possibility of introducing a new criminal offense: "illegal enrichment of public officials". The expert's opinion was that this was doable and necessary to incorporate into Montenegro's legal system. This finding was based on Article 20 of the UN Convention on the fight against the corruption, Constitution of Montenegro, and especially on the state of relations in Montenegro. The Government, or the uppermost circle of DPS, remained against introduction of this criminal offense to this day. After a consultative hearing during the joint session of the Committee for anticorruption and Committee for political system, judiciary and administration together with the representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme State Prosecutor and president of the Judicial Council, I believe that it will be very hard to entirely reject criminal sanctioning of public officials who enriched themselves illegally. The minimum that I expect is that some modification will be proposed, but the opposition and the NGOs will surely put some pressure on the Government to directly

Top of the government knows that among current officials, as well as among the former, there are those who illegally obtained significant wealth in various manners. In that fact one should also search for the cause of resistance to norm illegal enrichment of public officials as a criminal offense, as well as the expert comparison of Montenegro with developed countries of Europe.

implement the UN Convention.

» Even though the European Commission recommended criminalisation of illegal enrichment in line with the UN Convention on the prohibition of corruption, representatives of the Government and judiciary said that none of the EU member state has incorporated it into their legislation. How do you comment that?

It is clear that the EU member states have developed rule of law, as well as traditions and practices based on which they prosecute their public officials for corruption. Furthermore, the EU established a system of values which demands dismissals or resignations of public officials for the slightest omissions. Montenegro suffers from endemic corruption, especially on the highest level, which requires additional mechanisms to fight it. The uppermost ruling circles know that among the current officials, as well as among the former, there are those who illegally amassed significant wealth in various ways. This is the real source of resistance to regulation of illegal enrichment of public officials as criminal offense, and the grounds for comparison of Montenegro with developed countries of Europe. Montenegro will not be able to advance toward the rule of law until it brings the criminals among its public officials to justice.



» As the president of the Committee for Anticorruption, will you, or the opposition in general, propose the introduction of illegal enrichment into the Criminal Code or some other form of sanctioning??

The first step is to propose the formation of a multi-party working group, one that would involve the NGOs as well as representatives of the Ministry of Justice. Another option is that the Ministry of Justice should assume the responsibility for proposing the introduction of illegal enrichment of public officials as criminal offense within a reasonable deadline. Minister **Zoran Pažin** expressed his preparedness to act on this. If there are no results, then it is up to the opposition to propose the law.

» We expect a Special prosecutor for corruption and organised crime and Council of the Agency for the prevention of corruption to be appointed soon. EU representatives have great expectations from those bodies, and they expect specific results in the fight against corruption, especially against high-level corruption and organised crime. Do you think that establishment of a Special prosecution and Agency for the prevention of corruption will produce concrete results?

The Agency for the prevention of corruption starts with the operation on 1 January 2016, and it will be a body of the Parliament, with a

If there are no results, then the opposition is obliged to propose its law on illegal enrichment of public officials.

preventive function. We should not expect it to produce any results in the first year.

The Special prosecutor is only part of the Supreme State Prosecution, and he/she will act as such. The question is whether SSP had achieved any results in the first seven months of its existence, and it is my opinion that it did not. This is why I claim that there is no political will for the fight against high corruption in Montenegro. I expect that such a state of affairs will continue until the EC sets clear and rigid demands for Montenegro in that respect.

» Could the Committee for Anti-corruption have done more during these two and a half years? What are the next steps of the Committee?

Committee is the new working body of the Parliament, with a limited authority and unclear competences. That is not accidental, because the objective was to fulfil a formal requirement to appease the EC. It took us a lot of effort to remove multiple barriers for the functioning of the Committee, which had repercussions for its entire work. Now, I believe that control hearings should be conducted more frequently, especially of the Supreme State Prosecutor and the chief Special Prosecutor. I believe that the Committee will play an important role during the next phase of implementation of the Action plan for Chapters 23 and 24.

V. Žugić

EU the biggest donor in the world



Globally, the EU institutions and member states provided the majority of foreign aid in 2014 - more than a half of the official developmental assistance (ODA), despite the economic crisis which they currently face. Individually, the largest donor was the UK

which, in 2014, was the second largest provider of developmental assistance in the world after the USA. EU also leads in terms of developmental assistance relative to the gross domestic product (GDP), with 0.42% of its GDP going to aid in 2014, compared to the OECD average of 0.28%.

Ten years ago, EU announced it plans to increase development assistance to 0.7% of GNP by 2015, but that objective will not be achieved at the level of Union. However, four member states - Sweden, Luxembourg, Denmark and the UK - have already reached the benchmark.

Total assistance of the 28 EU member states rose from EUR 53 billion in 2013 to EUR 56.1 billion in 2014. The report also showed that the former imperial forces of Europe - France, UK, Spain, Portugal, Belgium and Germany - tend to allocate the largest portion of their assistance to their former colonies.

Germans most aggressive drivers in the EU



German drivers are most likely to tailgate and insult other drivers, but the frequency of such violations has no impact on their self assessment, as the overwhelming majority describes themselves as cautious and considerate on road.

What is more, citizens of other EU member states described Germans as the most considerate drivers.

A new research, conducted by Ipsos agency, showed that German drivers are biggest road-bullies, which was confirmed by that fact that two out of three drivers (67%) admitted to using offensive gestures, and verbal abuse, to insult other drivers. In comparison, 56% of their EU neighbours resorted to such aggression. Germans are also the most likely to tailgate, according to the survey's results. More than one-third (34%) said they purposefully follow close behind, or otherwise annoy drivers, in order to intimidate them. EU average: 32%. Also, 18% even get out of their vehicle to pursue a dispute with other drivers, compared to the EU average of 15%, reports EurActiv.com. Despite all this, they were as likely as the European average to follow traffic regulations.

Romania reduced VAT on food



Romanian Prime Minister **Victor Ponta** announced that during the summer, value-added tax (VAT) on food and non-alcoholic beverages would be cut by more than half this summer, in order to stimulate employment and help the poor.

Gradual reduction of other tax rates is also planned by 2019. The Prime Minister expects that the budget shortfall caused by tax reductions will be compensated by improved tax collection. The Romanian Fiscal council warned that the announced tax reduction could cause great and permanent damage to state finances. IMF, with which Romania has an arrangement, said that it could jeopardise years of efforts invested in the reduction of fiscal deficit.

According to this version of the tax law, VAT will be reduced from 24%, one of the highest rates in the EU, to 20% in 2016, and 18% in 2018, while VAT on some of the products, such as meat, fish, vegetables, fruits, dairy products, cattle, poultry and eggs, will be reduced to 9%. Ponta explained that the reduction of VAT on food to 9% from 24% is aimed to help the poor, in a country in which one third of household income is spent on food.

Public officials from the region spend taxpayers' money on limousines

Best vehicle - official vehicle!



By: Miroslav Filipović

When three ministers recently arrived to the building of the Croatian Government in the same vehicle, it became breaking news in almost every media that day. Such a thing does not happen every day here. Not even every year. Possibly at the beginning of their term in office when the new ruling crew wants to express social sensitivity and familiarity with the common people. That was the ascetic manner in which the left-wing coalition government headed by SDP's **Ivica Račan** most pompously introduced itself to the electoral victory in 2000. On that day, some of the ministers came to Marko's square on foot, the former minister of finances towed himself in with an ancient Renault, and the minister of justice came on - bike! Of course, the miracle lasted a day, after which things fell back into place, and the ministers into the official limousines.

Behind the tinted windows

One of the perks coming with the high, as well as with the lower public office is the official vehicle. And not just any kind. Herds of black limousines with enormous horsepower could put to shame CEOs of prosperous private companies or banks. Nor is Croatia alone - everywhere across this socially and economically ravaged region we encounter the same archetypal sight. Comfortable vehicle awaits a high official in the morning in front of his/her house or apartment. The engine

hums quietly, temperature inside of it same as the temperature of the leather seats in it. In the summer, the AC cools the comfortable cockpit. If the official has back pain, vehicle has a built-in massager in the seat. Also, there is a state of the art stereo device for good mood, and for relaxation, preferably, a panoramic roof. And in order to avoid curious or angry glances while driving, the vehicle is equipped with tinted windows. The life of an official is a life behind tinted windows. Since the official limousine became the symbol of insensitivity of the members of political elite, tinted windows symbolise their untouchability.

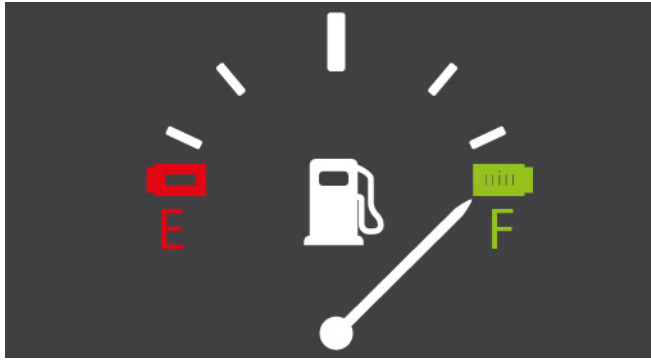
One of the most drastic examples occurred in Croatia two years ago, when a scandal broke out in Sisak-Moslavina county, where the former county prefect **Marina Lovrić-Merzel** of the then ruling SDP, first acquired, for the needs of the county, and then returned after the scandal broke out, a luxurious Audi A6 worth about half million of HRK (app. EUR 66.000). Of course, the official tender was published ahead of the purchase, its content resembling a letter to Santa Clause: "We are looking for a vehicle manufactured in 2013. Must have automatic gearbox, with a minimum of seven gears. Minimum engine power must be 150 kW, and minimum wheelbase distance must be 2900 mm. Radio with CD and MP3 player. With a minimum of 10 speakers..."

Letters to Santa Clause

To make the scandal even worse, the dismissed prefect was to cruise in this vehicle through one of the poorer counties in whose administrative headquarters - Sisak - nearly all of the once mighty industry (the steel plant, refinery...) had been destroyed.

At about the same time, in Vinkovci, whose economy is no better than that of Sisak, local mayor **Mladen Karlić** of HDZ also decided to replace his old official vehicle with a new one. His office sent a letter to Santa Clause with an even longer wish list: "Turbo diesel, EURO V, working span max. 2000 ccm, engine power minimum 120 kW, metallic black colour, carbon emissions max. 130 g/km, manual gearbox, minimum of six gears, front-wheel drive, servo control, height and depth adjustable, leather upholstered, travel computer,





electronic anti-theft blockade, xenon lights with a wash system, heating and ventilation of the vehicle while inactive, front and rear parking sensors..." When asked by journalists if that is a bit too much to ask for, the mayor justified the purchase explaining that it is more cost-effective to purchase a new vehicle than to service the old one.

In Croatia, the most expensive official (in this case - party) vehicle was a bulletproof BMW, worth about half a million euro, which members of HDZ once "donated" to their president **Ivo Sanader**. When another scandal broke out, the official explanation stated that it was a case of a favourable "new for old" exchange.

Official is (not) private

Whenever the public, in Croatia or in the neighbourhood, asks itself why the official vehicles have to be so expensive and luxurious, there is always the standards set of pre-packaged answers: they were taken on lease, which makes them cheaper; more powerful vehicles are safer; machines wear out quickly, hence they should be replaced more often; they do not use them for private purposes, but to perform public functions... Even if the citizens accept that, according to their officials, a vehicle five or six years old should already be "dismissed", the latter part of the explanation is least convincing, as it has been shown time after time that official vehicles are in fact used for private purposes. It is hard to find a politician who, for instance, comes to work in a "Scandinavian" manner, by using public transport or his/her own vehicle. As a rule, things are other way around.

In Serbia, state audit discovered that for almost a year, a driver used to come to Novi Sad from Belgrade every morning in order to pick up an assistant minister and drive him home in the evening. Twice a day his official vehicle would cover about 160 km without him in it.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Minister of industry **Vahid Hećo** was "spotted" with his official vehicle wearing swimming shorts on a beach.

Another former federal minister Milorad Bahilj got stuck in a blizzard with his wife and daughter, without his official driver, and when asked by journalists why he used the official vehicle without the designated driver, he briefly replied: "None of your business".

Croatian minister of health **Siniša Varga** was seen with his official vehicle in an Italian ski resort. However, he was covered by the official regulation according to which "ministers and state officials can use official personal middle-class vehicle, with personal driver 24 hours a day". Apparently this regulation was adjusted to the "needs" of ministers, even the private ones.

Evasive figures

Some governments recently decided to put some order into things. The Serbian government set up a special commission to monitor the usage of official vehicles, and it recently decided to sell a portion of its huge vehicle fleet. At the beginning of this year, local media counted 6.244 official vehicles at the disposal of the Serbian public institutions (off the record, some put that number to several tens of thousands!), whereas, for instance, bigger, wealthier and economically more advanced Germany has less than thousand such vehicles. Croatia has around 6.000 official vehicles as well. When all of its entities and counties are taken into account, Bosnia and Herzegovina supposedly has close to ten thousand official vehicles at its disposal, even though the exact figure is still unknown. What is known is that the Parliament, Council of ministers and state agencies and directorates have a total of 3.549 vehicles.

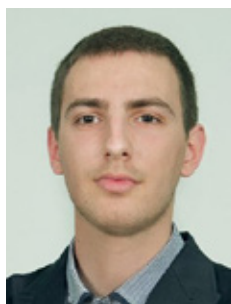
Slovenia is the exception in the region, with its Government strictly regulating the purchase of official vehicles and their motor power, analogous to the "motor power" of those who ride in them. The Slovenian Prime minister is the only one entitled to a luxurious upper-class vehicle, with an engine of 3.000 ccm, while other members of government and public officials can only get vehicles of a much lower engine power, as well as class. Besides, they do not worry as much about the age of vehicles as the Croatians do, and their ministers often drive in vehicles that are ten years old or older. And the Government of Croatia, whose ministers like to think of their country as "little Norway" because of all the oil and gas that has not yet been found in the Adriatic, has 40 official vehicles at its disposal, 17 more than the Norwegian Government.

Source: Al Jazeera

Chapter 28: Consumer and health protection



By: Ana Vujošević



By: Danilo Ajković

Continuous improvements of consumer status, prosperity and increases of living standards are some of the fundamental aims of the European Union. They have been built into the founding treaty of the EU and the consumer protection policy remains one of the main policies of EU. Treaty of Amsterdam (Article 153) defines the current minimum level of consumer protection in the EU by rights such as: *protection of consumers' health and safety; protection of consumers' economic interests; the right of consumers to information and education; the right to compensation and association, advocacy and participation of consumers with the aim of furthering their rights*. Chapter 28 of the EU acquis covers a wide range of issues, most of which could be grouped under two main categories: consumer protection and public health. The role of the state is to ensure effective market supervision, guaranteeing access to and safety of all products.

Cooperation between Montenegro and EU on consumer and health protection is based in the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) signed between the two parties. According to

Article 78 of the SAA *"Signatory parties will cooperate on aligning consumer protection standards in Montenegro with those of the Community. Effective consumer protection is necessary in order to ensure proper functioning of the market economy, and this protection will depend on development of the administrative infrastructure to secure the market oversight and law enforcement in this area"*. Montenegro's administrative capacities must be capable of following the rules, ensuring access to justice, and follow and exchange information on dangerous products with EU bodies.

1. ***Purchase wherever you wish***, whatever you wish – means you can freely buy what you like in any EU member state, knowing that you will not be charged custom duties of VAT on returning home.
2. ***If it doesn't work, return it back*** – if the product doesn't correspond to the description or the contract with the seller, it is possible to return it.
3. ***High security standards for consumer's food and goods*** – food safety is monitored along the entire production and supply chain, i.e. "from field to table".
4. ***Know what you're eating*** – the content of food must be printed on the label or in the information sheet accompanying the product. All ingredients must be listed.
5. ***Contracts should be favorable for the customer*** – the EU law forbids all acts or contractual conditions that may confuse the consumer.
6. ***Sometimes consumers even may change their minds*** – EU's law on distance commerce sets a period of at least seven days for the consumer to decide whether he or she wishes to keep the product.





7. The facilitation of price comparison – EU's regulations oblige supermarkets to rank their products according to price units. This means that it should be clear how much the product costs per unit of measure (kilogram, litre etc.). The same rule applies to financial services.

8. Consumers shouldn't get disoriented – lotteries which require you to buy a product in order to participate in them are forbidden by the EU law.

9. Protection while you are on holiday – entails an agency's commitment towards the customer that must be clearly stated in the travel contract.

10. Efficient compensations regarding agreements beyond the border – consumers have the right to make choice only after they had a chance to weigh the benefits and disadvantages of different purchases and compare prices across a number of countries.

The field of consumer protection also covers issues such as *dangerous imitations, liability for defective products and the Community's Rapid Alert System (RAPEX), as well as topics like sale of consumer goods and associated guarantees, unfair contract terms, price indications, doorstep selling, distance selling, distance marketing of financial services, consumer credits, misleading and comparative advertising, unfair commercial*

European regulations on Chapter 28 can be clustered into three groups:

- *The first group regulates the monitoring of goods and services offered to consumers. The consumer expects the goods and services that he or she purchases to meet a certain level of quality. Quality refers to the usefulness of the good and effectiveness of the service, convenience, performance standards, safety, reliability, absence of defects.*
- *The second group regulates consumer information, as information is the best defence against unfavourable goods or services. Very often the consumer is unable to access all the relevant information.*
- *The third group of legal norms regulates the contract between the seller and the consumer. Based on the agreement with the seller, the consumer obtains the necessary goods and services. Its specificity lies in the fact that it is concluded between two unequal parties – the seller as the stronger, the consumer as the weaker party. Consumer protection in the agreement between the two concerns specific regulations stipulated in favour of the consumer in order to alleviate this imbalance.*

practices, timeshare and package travel, and the rights of air passengers.

In Montenegro, a National programme of consumer protection is in force, accompanied by a new set of regulations on the setting up of Montenegrin standards for general product safety, as well as the new Law on Tourism. However, it is still necessary to adopt a new law on consumer protection that would encompass issues such as unfair trade practices, unfair contract terms, distance selling or extra-judiciary forms of reconciliation in consumer disputes



(arbitrage and mediation). As for administrative capacities, the department under Ministry of Economy that is in charge of consumer protection, as well as the Arbitration Committee responsible for consumer dispute must be more effective. An additional shortcoming is the fact that only two such organisations are active in Montenegro, both of them suffering from inadequate resources. Moreover, consumer protection awareness is at a very low level and ought to be improved through information and education campaigns. In the 2011 Progress Report the European commission notes that 87% of the population believes they are not adequately informed about issues concerning consumer protection.

The second important area covered by Chapter 28 is public health, which includes issues concerning tobacco, communicable diseases, blood, tissues and cells, mental health, as well as socio-economic determinants of health. Some strategies in this field have already been adopted in Montenegro, however their implementation lags behind due to limited administrative capacities, insufficient number of qualified personnel and lack of financial resources. Montenegro entered the harmonisation process, and the 2011 Progress Report stressed that more effort was needed to improve the system of donation and transplantation/transfusion

of blood, tissues and cells. Further, current amendments to the law limiting the use of tobacco products do not guarantee raising awareness of the Montenegrin citizens on the damage and negative repercussions of smoking on public health, and require further work.

Successful implementation of the legislation on consumer protection and public health requires not only effective public bodies, but also involvement of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the overall process. The role of NGOs is to help the consumers access their rights, inform and educate them. In Croatia, a powerful consumer movement was established, supported by an information campaign through handouts, leaflets, TV programmes and seminars in order to raise citizens' awareness about such issues, and similar activities would also be needed in Montenegro.

Effective consumer protection and its harmonisation across the EU member states are crucial to the correct functioning of the internal market, which is one of EU's goals. Moreover, consumer protection and measures to uphold public health are vital to the efforts to raise the overall quality of life, and the measures undertaken in this field are bound to benefit the entire Montenegrin society.

Initiative for infrastructural connecting of the Balkans

Good routes for the region and for the EU



By: mr Vladimir Vučković

Integrating Western Balkan states (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo) in European frameworks represents one of the top foreign-policy priorities of the EU and of its member states. The Western Balkan states share the very same perception of foreign policy, emphasising that full membership in European structures is the single most important goal to which all states from the region aspire.

Compatibility of interests between the EU and Western Balkans is reflected in anticipation of a common future. With its regional policy towards south-eastern Europe – the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAA) – the EU made it clear that it perceived Western Balkan states as members of the European family, but also that these states are facing difficult challenges in reforming their socio-political and socio-economic policies if they want to become part of this "elite club".

Drawing lessons from the 1990s, when it was not able to wield political and military power in its south-eastern backyard, the EU today focused its main foreign-policy objectives and economic activities towards the Western Balkan region. For the most part they are reflected in efforts to secure functional rule of law, strengthen infrastructural connections, establish conditions for the creation of new jobs, and improve economic cooperation.

Efficient implementation of regional cooperation and strengthening of good neighbourly relations through economic interconnections between Western Balkan states was the main instrument EU used to improve relations between the states of this region. Additionally, in order to further strengthen relations between Western Balkan states and resolve existing opened issues, the EU resorted to the organisation of Conference on Western Balkans in Berlin in August of 2014. Initiated by the EU's most influential member - Germany - and its leader **Angela Merkel**, it aimed to improve regional cooperation among Western Balkan states through the strengthening of economic and trading activities, while clearly stressing that the rule of law and full respect of Copenhagen criteria from

Even though to this day the EU has not implemented a single large-scale project that would be of benefit to all West Balkans countries, one should be optimistic and believe that the agreed infrastructural connections will once see the light of day. The EU could thus prove, beyond the mere official declarations, that the West Balkan region is in fact at the top of the European political agenda.

1993 are main prerequisites for EU integration. This conference was of particular significance for Western Balkan states due to the fact that Germany confirmed their European perspective, and highlighted the dedication aimed to achieve regional cooperation and economic governing as key factors of the enlargement process.

Organisation of the Conference of Western Balkan six in Priština, in March 2015, represents continuation of intensive negotiations that were conducted in informal meetings in Kotor and Belgrade in 2014. This conference is important for Western Balkan states because it sets the guidelines that will contribute to the improvement of regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations along with a full affirmation of economic policy. More precisely, it emphasises the importance of infrastructural connecting of Western Balkan states in order to complete the main regional projects in transport and energy policies. It also supports the creation of the Central Transportation Network aimed to connect all capital cities, economic centres and most important seaports of Western Balkan states with the EU.

Prime ministers from the Western Balkans made a step forward on 21 April 2015 in Brussels, when they signed a proclamation in the presence of European commissioner for neighbourhood policy and enlargement **Johannes Hahn**, European commissioner for traffic **Violeta Bulc** and general secretary of Council for regional cooperation **Goran Svilanović**, which confirms their shared



dedication to interconnectedness, good neighbourly relations, regional cooperation and European integration. Among other things, six Western Balkan states committed to the improvement of regional cooperation and economic stability as the key instruments which they could use together in order to achieve European standards and meet the criteria for EU accession. Moreover, Western Balkan states stressed that improved connections within the region, as well as within the EU, are the key ingredient of economic development and employment growth in the Western Balkans. It should also be noted that the leaders of Western Balkans agreed on the Central Transportation Network, and are currently reviewing options for the implementation of a

railway Corridor VIII. The total value of the agreed transport connections would amount to one billion euro, and the final deadline for the implementation of the agreed project would be 2030.

Even though to this day the EU has not implemented a single large-scale project that would be of benefit to all West Balkans countries, one should be optimistic and believe that the agreed infrastructural connections will once see the light of day. The EU could thus prove, beyond the mere official declarations, that the West Balkan region is in fact at the top of the European political agenda.

The completion of the agreement, i.e. the improvement of traffic and road infrastructure between the Western Balkan states would have a great influence on the improvement of the economy and trade between these states, leading eventually to palpable economic growth and stability. Additionally, regional infrastructural connecting the main centres of Western Balkan states would contribute to more intensive exchange of goods and services, and therefore to the growth in productivity, improving the quality of life and standards of living of the citizens of these states.

Last, but not least, the improvement of economic policy in the region would also contribute to better political relations among these countries, through more effective regional cooperation, thus leading to creation of more reliable good neighbourly relations - which is indeed the ultimate goal of EU's regional policy.

Plan for Montenegro

The most important elements for Montenegro on the regional agreement for interconnections in the Western Balkans are the establishment of functional road traffic on Route 2 - Podgorica (Montenegro) - Drač (Albania) - Fier (Albania) - Telepena (Albania) - Qafe Bote (Greek border) and Route 4 - Vršac (Romanian border) - Belgrade (Serbia) - Podgorica (Montenegro) - Bar (Montenegro). Also in the plans are the improvements of railway infrastructure on Route 2, on the relation Podgorica (Montenegro) - Drač/Tirana (Albania), and Route 4 on the relation Vršac (Romanian border) - Belgrade (Serbia) - Podgorica (Montenegro) - Bar (Montenegro). In addition to this, the indicative expansion of the Central Transport Network TNT-T will also concern Airport Podgorica and Port Bar.

New refugee crisis in the Mediterranean

Europe's tragic shores



Piše: dr Vera Šćepanović

On 20 April President of the Council of EU **Donald Tusk** called an emergency summit on the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean. The summit came on the heels of a tragic incident in which around 900 persons drowned after their boat capsized off the Libyan coast. This was only the latest in a series of deadly incidents: just a few days earlier, on 13 April, another ship carrying 500 migrants also sank, and over 400 people are believed to have drowned. The death toll for the first four months of 2015 is already close to 2000, a 20-fold increase compared to the same period in 2014.

Especially embarrassing for the European authorities is the detail that the terrifying surge in deaths was not accompanied by a comparable increase in the migration flows: in fact, according to the International Organisation for Migration, fewer migrants have landed on the European coast by April than in the comparable period last year. Instead, the activists and the non-governmental sector have put the blame on the EU's refusal to support Italian government's search-and-rescue operation *Mare Nostrum*, which was subsequently discontinued in November 2014.

Mare Nostrum was itself setup after a major incident in 2013 when hundreds of people drowned off the Italian island of Lampedusa. The operation was supported by the Italian Navy and dedicated aircrafts, and had the explicit mandate to monitor and respond to calls for rescue in a wide area of the Mediterranean, covering almost 70.000 square kilometres around the straight of Sicily. Among the international refugee organisations, *Mare Nostrum* was loudly commended for helping to

Political instability that has swept northern Africa and the Middle East in the aftermath of the Arab Spring has resulted in about 16.7 million people fleeing their countries, according to UNHCR

Especially embarrassing for the European authorities is the detail that the terrifying surge in deaths was not accompanied by a comparable increase in the migration flows: in fact, according to the International Organisation for Migration, fewer migrants have landed on the European coast by April than in the comparable period last year.

save refugee lives, but at home it was both expensive and politically unpopular. Its operation costs, of around EUR 9 mn per month, were mostly born by Italy, with the EU contributing around 1.5 million from External Borders Fund. Italy's calls on other European states to help co-finance the programme were rejected, citing lack of funds. At the same time, concerns were voiced that a search-and-rescue operation was encouraging migration, as more people would opt for a journey across the sea if the risk was smaller. **Gil Arias-Fernandez**, executive director of EU border agency Frontex, told European Parliament in September 2014 that the Italian operation was practically a subsidy to the traffickers, who collected exorbitant fees from the hopeful migrants and then dumped them a short way off the coast, trusting that the Italian marines will pick them up. In September 2014, Italy said it was unable to continue the operation alone, and the EU member state agreed to substitute it by a Frontex mission *Triton*. *Triton's* operating costs are less than a third of its predecessor's, and its mission limited to policing an area of 30 km off the European Mediterranean coast, making it incapable of aiding distressed ships at high seas, which is where most of the deathly accidents happen.

The series of tragic accidents in April seem to have at least convinced the European officials that more action is needed. At the emergency summit, the European heads of states and governments agreed to triple the funding for Frontex to a total of EUR 120 million, bringing the amount of resources back

to the level of *Mare Nostrum*. The UK, France and Germany also pledged to contribute additional vessels and aircrafts. But the operation remains firmly focused on preventing illegal immigration, rather than helping the refugees. Out of the 17 points agreed by the Council, only four concern measures to accelerate processing of asylum applications and help settle the refugees. The rest focuses mainly on capturing and destroying traffickers' boats before they could be deployed for transport of migrants, and ensuring rapid return of those without the right of asylum to source countries.

This may stem the tide of asylum-seekers in the short run, but the migrants are almost sure to find another route. Political instability that has

swept northern Africa and the Middle East in the aftermath of the Arab Spring has resulted in about 16.7 million people fleeing their countries, according to UNHCR. It is hardly a wonder that many of them are willing to risk their lives to move themselves and their families to the island of peace and prosperity that is the European Union. And the EU has the moral and legal responsibility to take them. Although the public opinion prefers to discuss "bogus" asylum seekers and "irregular" economic migrants, the majority of immigrants are in fact refugees, fleeing wars and violent regimes in their home countries. In 2014, over 80% of applicants from Syria, Eritrea, Iraq and Somalia, who together make up 30% of all asylum applicants, received a positive response in the first instance.

An inefficient system of legal migration

A far better solution would therefore be to develop a more effective European system to manage legal migration. Providing a safer channel for the processing of asylum applications – for example, via EU delegations in source countries – would create an alternative to the risky, and often deadly, trips across the Mediterranean. Moreover, it would also enable EU to share the burden of refugees more evenly. Currently, just five EU member states – Sweden, Germany, Italy, France and Hungary – account for three quarters of all asylum applications, and an agreement among the EU member states (the so-called "Dublin Convention") ensures that the responsibility for processing applications falls with the state of first entry. Moreover, due to the lack of mutual recognition of asylum decisions, even when they obtain a positive decision refugees cannot freely move within the EU but must remain in the country that granted them asylum until they obtain permanent residence.

Italy has long complained that it is unable to cope with the level of migration reaching its shores, and has been in turn accused by other member states of illegally letting unregistered migrants to cross into other European states. But so far all attempts to either ensure a harmonised asylum system or promote some kind of burden-sharing arrangements have failed. In 2010, an EU pilot project on intra-EU relocation managed to resettle an entire 227 persons throughout the EU, with ten EU member states offering them places. Now a proposal by the president of the European Commission, **Jean-Claude Juncker**, to resettle 10.000 refugees throughout Europe met with outright rejection. The conclusions of the Council only include a principle agreement on a "voluntary pilot project" on resettlement. That is unlikely to be enough, but the EU leaders have a hard time convincing their citizens to show solidarity for others. Anti-immigration parties have been gaining popularity everywhere from Sweden to France. In the Netherlands, the ruling coalition nearly fell apart in late April over disputes on the provision of shelter to asylum seekers, and in Germany the police have been registering a surge of attacks on refugee centres. Meanwhile, as the summer brings better weather to the Mediterranean, the season for immigrant boat trips is only beginning.

Declaration of the Parliamentary Committee for Stabilisation and Association

Prevent tabloid attacks on civil society activists

Parliamentary Committee for Stabilisation and Association (PCSA) between the EU and Montenegro reiterated its concern with the lack of progress in the area of media freedom and urged European Commission to pay attention to freedom of the media and provide further support to Montenegro to achieve improvement in this area. "PCSA considers it essential for Montenegro, for deepening democratic standards, to have an independent public service media with editorial independence; expressed strong concerns about the articles published in the 'Informer' newspaper, which propagate national and religious hatred, strongly condemned the ongoing attacks of this newspaper on civil society activists and progressive oriented politicians and called on the competent authorities to protect civil society activists from such attacks and build an environment in which they can work without fear of reprisal", states the Declaration adopted by Montenegrin and European MPs on April 8 and 9 2015, during the tenth meeting of PCSA, jointly chaired by the president of Montenegrin Parliament **Ranko Krivokapić** and chairwoman of EU Delegation **Anneliese Dodds**.

PCSA also recognised the need for regard for self-regulatory ethical media standards aimed at strengthening professionalism and accountability to public.

The Declaration also welcomed the opening of two additional negotiating chapters (chapter 16: Taxation and Chapter 30: External Relations), bringing it up to a total of 18 chapters.

"PCSA reiterated that rule of law-related reforms constitute the core of the European integration process and are an essential condition for progress in overall accession talks; underlined that political will remains crucial for achieving and maintaining substantial progress in the fight against organised crime and corruption, in particular high-level corruption, which is the litmus test for the independence, efficiency and professionalism of the judicial system", states the document.

The document encouraged parliamentary

PCSA considers it essential for Montenegro, for deepening democratic standards, to have an independent public service media with editorial independence

stakeholders to improve the Law on Parliamentary Inquiry; noted the need to "satisfactorily resolve the Recording and Telekom affairs, in accordance with the law".

PCSA "Invited the government to effectively implement OSCE/ODIHR, Venice Commission, and GRECO recommendations on electoral rules in line with European standards and best practices; noted that local elections were marred by allegations of electoral wrongdoing; stressed that these should be properly investigated and, where necessary, prosecuted by the competent authorities", states the declaration. The MPs also called for long term planning with regard to tourism along the coastline and for "the creation of strong mechanisms preventing the destruction of the environment and corruption in the field of spatial planning and construction".

PCSA commended the efforts of the competent authorities to guarantee LGBTI rights and the right to peaceful assembly during the last Podgorica Pride, but also expressed concern that attacks on LGBTI community members and activists continued and that only a small number of the cases were treated and prosecuted as criminal acts.

According to the document, European MPs and their Montenegrin colleagues encouraged further efforts to strengthen the capacities of the Ombudsman's office in anti-discrimination and human rights cases. "PCSA welcomed the fact that the anti-discrimination law was almost fully aligned with the acquis; invited the government to address remaining shortcomings concerning racial discrimination and related sanctions; called on the authorities to provide all necessary financial and administrative resources to the Anti-Discrimination Council", states the document.

V.Ž.

Ambassador Drobnič guest at the second *European cafe*



On April 7, Centre for Civic Education (CCE) continued with the project «*European cafe*», in cooperation with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), on which occasion it hosted a meeting between NGO representatives and Ambassador **Mitja Drobnič**, Head of the EU Delegation to Montenegro, titled "*The role and significance of non-governmental organisations in the process of negotiations of Montenegro with European Union – from the perspective of EU*". **Daliborka Uljarević**, executive director of CCE, said that «*the role of Montenegrin non-governmental sector is inevitable in the process of negotiations with the EU, especially since state institutions do not possess the administrative capacity needed to transpose the values and the EU acquis in an optimal manner. Through its project activities, the*

NGO sector as a corrector of social relations provides an immeasurable contribution to development of a functional democracy in Montenegro». Ambassador **Drobnič** was pleased with the quality and depth of discussion he had with civil sector representatives and stressed the significance of their past and future contribution to the process of European integration.

European cafe gathered 25 NGO representatives from different fields, who exchanged in an informal discussion their opinions on the past trends in negotiations, their vision of the ways in which NGOs can contribute to this process, as well as on the challenges they are confronted with, the EU support programmes, the mandate of the EU Delegation to Montenegro and opportunities for further improvement of cooperation between the Delegation and NGO.

Executive director of CCE meets representatives of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Daliborka Uljarević, executive director of CCE, participated in the meeting with representatives of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose delegation to Montenegro was headed by **Robert de Groot**, general director for European cooperation and deputy minister of foreign affairs for European affairs and **Laurent Stokvis**, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands for Montenegro and Serbia. The focus of the meeting was the role of Montenegrin civil society in the process of membership negotiations with EU and on the state of affairs within chapters that relate to the rule of law, judiciary and fight against corruption. In addition to **Daliborka Uljarević**, the meeting was attended by **Stevo Muk**, president of the managing board of Institute Alternative (IA), and **Tea Gorjanc-Prelević**, executive director of Human Rights Action (HRA).

Presentation of IPA 2014

On 23 April 2015, at the offices of EU Info Centre, an information session was organised about the 2014 IPA Programme for civil society, regarding the call for submission of projects to the "IPA 2014 Civil Society Facility Montenegro Programme". The new programme objectives were presented to participants, as well as the priority areas and other issues of concern for Montenegro. NGO representatives from across Montenegro were present the session, and **Nikola Donović**, CCE programme coordinator, attended the presentation on the behalf of the Centre for Civic Education.

On campaigns, social networks and public relations

The Tirana office of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) organised on 24-26 March 2015 a training on the topic "*Campaigns, social networks and public relations*". Training participants were representatives of youth branches of political parties and NGOs from Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Turkey, who worked on the strengthening of their communicational skills and researched the influence that social networks have on campaigns through theoretical review and practical exercises with the experts on media and public relations. The participants from Montenegro were **Svetlana Pešić**, CCE associate and **Vildana Ljuković**, CCE programme assistant.

CCE hosts participants of the prestigious Marshall Memorial Fellowship Programme

As in the previous years, Centre for Civic Education (CCE) hosted the participants of prestigious American Marshall Memorial Fellowship (AMMF) programme during their stay in Montenegro from 27 April to 1 May 2015. During their stay in Montenegro, programme participants had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with Montenegro's natural beauties, visit various parts of the country, and learn about its history and culture, as well as about the current developments in political and economic relations, especially in relation to Euro-Atlantic integrations and the rule of law. To do so, they met with a number of decision-makers, including: **Ranko Krivokapić**, president of the Parliament of Montenegro; Dr. **Igor Lukšić**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs; **Aleksandar Damjanović**, president of the parliamentary Committee for finance, budget and economy; **Aleksandar Andrija Pejović**, chief negotiator of Montenegro with the EU and state secretary for European integrations; **Vesko Garčević**, national coordinator for the accession to NATO alliance; **Genci Nimanbegu**, president of Albanian committee and MP of FORCA in the Parliament of Montenegro; and **Dritan Abazović**, vice-president of "URA" and independent MP. They also met with high officials from the US Embassy to Montenegro, Montenegrin businessmen, as well as with the owners and editors of the daily paper, net portal and TV «Vijesti». A special meeting was organised with journalists of TV Vijesti and RTCG, and NGOs active in the field of the rule of law (Institute Alternative, CEMI, CRNVO and CCE). During their individual meetings they spoke with representatives of the Montenegrin Chamber of Commerce, American Chamber of Commerce in Montenegro, UNDP, IOM, MAPSS, Council of RTCG, Union of Free Trade Unions of Montenegro, Queer Montenegro, Liberal party, and etc. CCE was the first to initiate these visits of the American Marshall Memorial Fellows, and it hosted the first group of participants of AMMF in 2008. In wake of their positive impressions, the visits continued and became a tradition. In this manner, CCE aims to develop cooperation with the most prestigious organisations from all over the world and actively participate in the promotion of Montenegro among world leaders for the purpose of contributing to democratisation of the country as well as to further development of Euro-Atlantic integrations.

Ethics of MPs: from standards to practice

Institute Alternative (IA) organised a panel discussion on the subject *Ethics of MPs: from standards to practice* in Podgorica on 17 April 2015, with support of the Foundation for open society - Think Tank Fund. The aim was to provide a critical review of the content and application of the parliamentary Code of Conduct, whose adoption was envisaged by the Action Plan for Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights). The panellists were representatives of every political club in the Parliament of Montenegro. **Boris Marić**, senior legal advisor and **Mira Popović**, programme associate, participated on behalf of CCE.

CCE's Representative at Global Media Freedom Conference

At the invitation of the World Association of Newspapers and News publishers (WAN-IFRA) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, **Ana Vujošević**, programme coordinator at the Centre for Civic Education (CCE), attended the Global Media Freedom Conference, organised in Copenhagen on 29-30 April 2015. The Conference was opened by **Morgen Jensen**, Danish minister of trade and development cooperation. The focus of the conference was the critical role of the media in development of societies, promotion of government accountability, and the strengthening of political cohesion in countries at different levels of democracy. The CCE representative presented the findings of the research *"Equal chances for all media in Montenegro?"* which looked at the spending on Montenegrin media from public funds during 2013.

A.V

Fellowship in Leibniz Institut for the Social Sciences

The EUROLAB at the GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences in Cologne is a European Data Laboratory for Comparative Social Research established in 1996 by Dr. h.c. Ekkehard Mochmann as access facility to the data in the archive holdings from all fields of empirical social research. It offers support for individual researchers and research groups who want to work at the EUROLAB in Cologne, e.g. during sabbaticals or research fellowships, or within specific research projects. Individual researchers, who carry out international comparative social research using survey data provided by the GESIS Data Archive for the Social Sciences, may apply for support to access EUROLAB for maximum one month between September and December 2015. Successful applicants will receive a travel grant that covers travel costs (economy class, up to 450 Euro) and accommodation.

The deadline for applications is 31 May 2015.

For more information, please visit <http://www.gesis.org/en/institute/competence-centers/european-data-laboratory/access-application/how-to-access/>

MA in East European Studies – MIREES at University of Bologna

MIREES is a joint program offered by the University of Bologna- Forlì Campus, Italy, together with the Vytautas Magnus University at Kaunas, Lithuania, the Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary, and the St. Petersburg State University, Russia. Enrolled students spend the first year in Forlì. In the second year a minimum of 5 months will be spent at one of the Partner Universities or at an associated partner University, including the University of Ljubljana and the University of Zagreb. Mobility grant is offered to all enrolled students, thanks to Erasmus+ or the MIREES mobility scheme.

The International Joint Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Research and Studies on Eastern Europe (MIREES) is taught entirely in English (120 ECTS). The curriculum offers interdisciplinary, in-depth knowledge of post-socialist countries in transition, new EU member states, and new East-European neighbor countries. Students develop language skills by learning one Eastern European language (3 levels of Russian, Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, Bulgarian, Lithuanian, Slovak; Hungarian is available in the second year). Moreover, the program is designed to train perspective PhD students, analysts, area experts, consultants and mediators, to meet the needs of research institutes, the European Commission, international agencies, voluntary organizations and NGO's, public administration, managers, corporations and banks active in the Baltic sea region, East-Central Europe and the Balkans. Most of the alumni have found employment in these fields, including international trade and IT companies, ministries and NGOs. The best graduates are currently attending doctorate programs at the Universities of Oxford, Kent, the New School, Giessen, St. Gallen, Galway, Durham, and other prestigious international academic institutions.

The deadline to apply is 18 May 2015.

For more information please read the MIREES Call for Applications and visit <http://corsi.unibo.it/2Cycle/mirees/Pages/ProspectiveStudents.aspx?menu=International%20Students>

Published by: Centre for Civic Education (CCE)

EIC Bulletin - European Pulse - is an electronic magazine which comes out with the support from Friedrich Ebert since 2005. From February 2015, European Pulse comes out within "EU news - be informed!" project which is financed out of communicational budget of EU Delegation to Montenegro, and co-financed by Friedrich Ebert foundation. Project is conducted by Daily Press Vijesti and Centre for civic education (CCE). It is filed in Ministry of culture under number 578.

Editor-in-chief: Vladan Žugić
 Editorial board: Vera Šćepanović, Daliborka Uljarević, Svetlana Pešić, Ana Vujošević, Vladimir Vučković
 Translation and proofreading: CGO
 Design and illustrations: Dragana Koprivica
 Production: Centre for Civic Education (CCE)

Address: Njegoševa 36/I Tel/fax: +382 20 665 112, 665 327 ep@cgo-cce.org, info@cgo-cce.org
 You can download *European Pulse* at www.cgo-cce.org
 or subscribe to our monthly e-mail by contacting ep@cgo-cce.org

Content of the publication is the sole responsibility of Centre for civic education (CCE) and it does not reflect the views of European Union nor should it be deemed in that manner.