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FOCUS OF THIS ISSUE

To what extent can the IPARD-like be of aid to farmers in Montenegro and are they ready to make use of EU support

Interview

Head of the EU Delegation to Montenegro
Mitja Drobnič

Region

Informal employment rampant



Foreword: Patients



Vladan Žugčić

The majority of the Montenegrin journalist public once again broke the record in spitting upwards.

It's the sport in which you always know that the spit will most certainly fall back on those who agreed to join the game - whether because they were bribed, whether their mental capacities are such as to refuse to believe that the sky is blue anywhere but above Montenegro, or just because they get off on hanging out with the political and business elite who ridicule them behind their backs, because they are in on the game.

Hoping in vain that information could be concealed in the age of new media, the papers with financial links to the Government or the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) failed to publish immediately the information, published by daily Vijesti, that the Commission of the Ministry of Health recommended, back on 15 August 2008, urgent removal of the management of the hospital in Bijelo Polje in order to "save the inhabitants of Bijelo Polje and the surroundings" and "protect the rights and health of patients".

When that couldn't be covered up, "Pobjeda" decided to do some "research" in the following days, in order to investigate who could have leaked the Commission's findings to "Vijesti". I spent days after that looking for a mention of the UK nurse who poisoned her patients on purpose, like - there you go, such things happen in the EU too. But even such relativisation could not change the fact that the nurse in question ended her medical career the moment she was discovered.

Educational, social and health systems are the pillars of a modern state. The level of media freedom in one society is not measured by what the media write, but by what they ignore.

If it weren't for the cover-up in the Ministry of Health of the state of the hospital in Bijelo Polje, would we now have the spread of infection at neo-natal department and a dead baby?

Is it dangerous for the media to keep quiet about the health and rights of patients?

Would these same journalists keep quiet if the failures of the health system endangered the health of their child, parent, or friend?

Calendar

- 5 February **More than 1000 regulations by 2018** / Government adopted Montenegro's EU accession Programme, which envisages, according to the prior announcements, adoption of 167 strategic documents and 1.076 laws and subordinate acts in the next three years.
- 19 February **Project "Support to the adoption of Schengen acquis"** / EU Delegation to Montenegro, Ministry of Interior of Montenegro, in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Interior of Austria and Ministry of Interior of Slovenia, presented the twinning project "Support to the adoption of Schengen acquis". On that occasion, Head of the EU Delegation to Montenegro **Mitja Drobnič**, said that *"in order for Montenegro to become part of the Schengen zone, it will have to assume the responsibility for controlling the external border of the zone, as well as for issuing Schengen visas"*. Austrian minister of Interior, **Johanna Mikl-Leitner**, clarified that the EU has provided one million euro for this project.
- 24 February **Montenegro made no effort to sanction war crimes** / Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament adopted a Resolution on Montenegro prepared by the country rapporteur **Charles Tannock**. In the Resolution, the EP welcomes Montenegro's progress, but notes that more effort is needed to combat corruption, ensure independence of judiciary and freedom of expression. The EP also expressed "concern that no serious efforts have been taken to tackle impunity in war crime cases", states the document.
- 26 February **2% unfounded asylum applications from Montenegro** / The European Commission warned that the abuse of asylum by citizens of countries included in visa-free regime of travel in the Western Balkans still causes great concern. Citizens of Serbia still account for most of asylum seekers from Western Balkans in the EU and the Schengen zone (42% more compared to 2013), followed by citizens of Macedonia (21%), Albania (21%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (14%) and Montenegro (2%).
- 26 February **Lange: We expected the Special Prosecution to already be in place** / Head of the Montenegrin unit in the Directorate General for Neighbouring Policy and EU Enlargement Dirk Lange said that he expected the Special Prosecutor's Office to be already showing results in the fight against corruption. Instead, the SPO has not even yet been formed, and is still awaiting Parliamentary approval. Lange's statement came in response to the question about where he sees the greatest delays in Montenegro's progress on its commitments. In relation to the fight against corruption and organised crime, he said the EU saw very little of the improvement it had hoped for a year and a half ago when APs for chapters 23 and 24 were adopted.

The crisis of democracy in the Balkans



By: Florian Bieber

The author is a professor of history of South-Eastern Europe at Karl-Franzens University in Graz, Austria

Recently, nearly all Macedonian TV channels stopped broadcasting their programmes and tuned into the press conference of the Prime minister **Nikola Gruevski**, who accused the president of the largest opposition party **Zoran Zaev** of espionage and "endangering the constitutional order" - head of the opposition, along with an unnamed foreign party, had tried to take down the government by force. Zaev has been threatening for months that he will publish a "bomb" and claims that he possesses a document that could take down the government. It is unclear why he did not publish them already, a fact that only serves to fuel additional speculations. Gruevski and the state prosecution claim that Zaev had come into possession of partially edited video-materials with the aid of some foreign intelligence agencies, and tried to use them to force Gruevski to accept him as a coalition partner. Leaving aside the problem of whether this constitutes a high treason or a coup d'état, the issues is symptomatic of the crisis of democracy in Macedonia and other states of the Western Balkans.

People vote for money and a job

Less dramatic than **Recep Erdoğan's** authoritarian scoop in Turkey, and less dangerous for the EU than **Viktor Orbán's** pitch to create an illiberal democracy in Hungary, the rulers of Southern Eastern Europe are increasingly undermining the foundations of a functioning democracy, even if they continue to comply with formal democratic rules. This is most clearly apparent in the pattern of defamations against political opponents and independent journalists.

For instance, in Montenegro one NGO activist and severe critic of long-term government of **Milo Đukanović** came under attack by a tabloid "Informer". Each day, that same paper magnifies the role of a new strongman in Serbia, **Aleksandar Vučić**, while other media in Serbia practice the discipline of self-censorship. The formerly critical – as in supportive of the opposition – Blic (which is part of Swiss Ringier-Gruppe and German Axel-Springer) recently accused a well known gay actor **Goran Jevtić** of pedophilia - apparently unfoundedly – while at the same time honouring Vučić with the publication of his "Diary from Davos". All of this creates an atmosphere of fear, where critical media and intellectuals increasingly refrain from criticising the Government, and the public is being disciplined to obey the regime.

But how does Vučić win the elections in Serbia, or Gruevski in Macedonia, **Milorad Dodik** in the Republic of Srpska or Đukanović in Montenegro? Are voters really that naive or do they actually want to live under little dictators? Although there is perhaps some truth in both, the reasons are quite

easy to understand: one votes for money and a job. Votes are bought on a regular basis, and the economic crisis has made 50 or 100 euros more valuable than a few years back. Moreover, there is a direct link between having a job and voting for the ruling party, because in most former Yugoslav states party membership is more important for a job in the public service today than it was in the times of communist Yugoslavia.

Since there is hardly any difference in the parties' programmes and ideologies, and since from Sarajevo to Belgrade the dominant assessment of the politicians is that they are "all the same", it is only rational to vote for the party that at least provides a modest but visible contribution to the citizen's prosperity. Hence, behind the national-populist facades lies a clientelistic network that allows parties to secure their hold on power. And in this they receive unexpected support from the EU. No, the EU does not support would-be dictators in the Balkans, but the dynamics of the relationship between the EU and the Balkans strengthens the above circumstances.

The EC progress reports offer a smattering of facts and evaluations ("limited progress" or "some further progress"). But all these strategies, plans, initiatives and projects only obscure the crucial question: What is the state of democracy in this country? The EU notes that all these states are in principle democracies, but lacks the criteria and nuanced view to distinguish between policy statements and formal democratic institutions on one hand, and actual practice on the other. The fact that all the strongmen of the Balkans (and there are all men) swear that they will lead their countries to the EU should not be overestimated. No politician in the Balkans today can win an election, or be internationally accepted without paying lip service to the "strategic goal" of EU membership.

Opponents of enlargement satisfied

This situation, after all, suits those states and parties from the EU, which do not want further enlargement. The growing authoritarian tendencies in the Balkans can be easily used to push the question of EU accession of these states onto the back burner. This creates a symbiosis between the opponents of enlargement and authoritarian politicians in the Balkans. To break this dynamics, we need clear and simple words, more efforts attention to the substance of democracy, and a tangible rewards for the states that manage to democratize themselves and thus get closer to EU.

Source: Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ)

To what extent can the IPARD-like be of help to farmers in Montenegro and are they ready to use the support from the EU

Time for sowing



By: Svetlana Pešić

Residents of island Ugljani from Croatia, who have been facing the sea and fishing for centuries, decided in 2008 to form an association "Omega 3" with 24 members and a fleet of 30 boats, mostly used for fishing. They bought an acre of land and began to construct a distribution centre. The total investment amounted to about 300 000 €, out of which 250 000 € was a loan from the Croatian bank for reconstruction and development (CBRD). During the investment period, they applied with a portion of their project and received support from the European Union (EU) IPARD programme, which facilitated their work and alleviated the financial burden, as they could now pay off part of their loan from CBRD. Today, they catch approximately 13-14.000 tons of fish every year, about a quarter of the total Croatian catch of sardines and anchovies. This is just one of many

success stories from Croatia, where farmers succeeded in strengthening their capacities with support of the IPARD programme.

Starting from this year, Montenegrin farmers will also have the opportunity to use similar funds through the IPARD-like programme. Ministry of agriculture and rural development, EU and World Bank (WB) officially initiated the programme in December 2014. In the 2015 project period, € 4.1 million will be available to agricultural producers, in form of grants. Out those € 4.1 million, € 3.8 million were provided by the EU. With the ability to draw on support up to 50% of the total investment, Montenegrin farmers will have the opportunity to increase livestock and cultivated areas, reduce production costs and achieve higher competitiveness. The maximum individual investment is €100.000 in all areas of agriculture.

World Bank supported IPARD-like, given that the experiences of other countries during the EU accession process showed that many farmers could not meet strict IPARD conditions, which is why part of resources that Union allocated for agriculture remained unused. Thus the EU offered €179 million to Croatia through IPARD in the period of 2007-2011, but due to lack of initial preparation of the administration, €25 million earmarked for 2008 were returned to the EU's coffers. The EC generously allowed Croatia to continue to use these funds until the end of 2013, thus making an exception compared to 12 countries which became members of Union during two previous enlargement cycles.

Therefore, IPARD-like is a programme to prepare the administration and advisory services for stricter conditions when drawing on the funds from IPARD, as well as to enable the country to compete on the EU market.

"We expect that the available fund of grants will be used entirely. That means that €8.2 million from IPARD-like will be invested in Montenegrin agriculture during the next two years. Support in the amount of 50% of total investment is an excellent opportunity for Montenegrin farmers to increase livestock and cultivated areas, reduce production costs and achieve higher competitiveness",

Irena Kovačević, advisor for public relations in

MIDAS and the "Recording" affair

MIDAS project, which preceded the IPARD-like project, will be remembered for its links with the "Recording" affair. Namely, the audio recording captured the former minister of agriculture, now the political director of DPS **Tarzan Milošević**, saying that five million euro provided by World Bank within MIDAS project, intended for agricultural producers, could be useful to the party in the "following month", referring to the parliamentary election campaign in October 2012. Milošević denied the accusations before the Board of Inquiry, which examined, based on these

recordings, the charges that that DPS misused state resources for electoral purposes, and insisted that the validity of disbursements was confirmed by four oversight commissions of the World Bank. During the last public address of the Prosecutor on the "Recording" affair, over a year ago, the prosecutor said that charges referring to the MIDAS are still being investigated.



Tarzan Milošević

Ministry of agriculture and rural development told *European Pulse*.

Two days ahead of the application deadline for IPARD-like, the Ministry received more than 250 demands for support to investments from agricultural households. *"Our expectation that we would receive the highest number of applications just before the deadline were fulfilled, and the final number of applications will range from 300–400. The expectation was based on the experience from previous MIDAS calls, where the highest number of demands was submitted in the last few days, as well as on the support provided by Ministry*

Government proposed that the Ministry of Agriculture should manage EU monies

Ministry of Agriculture confirmed that the condition access to the IPARD funds is to establish an agency for agriculture, but says that it is not obligatory for the agency to be independent. *"The control over the use of funds is necessary. In some EU member states, Agencies were formed precisely like the Agency/Directorate in Montenegro – within line ministries of agriculture. At this stage, the Agency works as the Directorate for IPARD payments within the Ministry of agriculture and rural development. Directorate was recognised by Government, as a body that will govern financial means of IPA V component (IPARD). Directorate was a subject of two sets of independent revision which estimated that its functioning is in accordance with the rules of EU. Announcing of IPARD-like call is a proof that Agency functions well"* says Irena Kovačević. The efficient work of IPARD agency requires involvement of great number of institutions, and the successful organisation of the entire IPARD programme will depend (in)directly based on their involvement. Establishing a connection with so called technical bodies, or state administration bodies, is of great importance, as well as with institutions whose primary task will be the assessment of users of IPARD support regarding the area of meeting minimum national and EU standards. Technical bodies needed for conducting of IPARD programmes have been identified: Veterinary Administration, Phyto-sanitary administration, Agency for protection of environment, Ministry of sustainable growth and tourism, Ministry of work and social care, Ministry of health, Directorate for water and Montenegro.

What Gvido did

Gvido Prister, from village Mrežnica, Croatia, managed to make his long-time dream come true, through the IPARD project - he restored his small village, which was down to only four inhabitants, and developed village tourism. In late 2010, he found about an IPARD call for applications which referred specifically to development of rural tourism, and did not think twice – he had already drafted plans for the construction of three tourist objects in his orchard, which he intended to grow ecologically. He invested about €8 000 in the project; one half he received from IPARD, and the other from CBRD. As media reported, Prister pointed out that all norms which have to be met, regarding the harmonisation with EU standards, whether they relate to area of environmental protection, or health protection, seemed hard at first, but that one soon after realises that they are of general interest and benefit the community. For construction, he hired mainly local contractors, and within the period of six months all three objects were completed and luxuriously furnished, with a total of 18+6 beds. First guests arrived on September 1st 2012. Prister is very satisfied with the number of visits and reactions of guests, and says he will assist others who have similar ideas.

representatives, Directorate for IPARD payments and advisory services during the creation of applications for farmers", Kovačević stated.

Ministry expects that through this programme, the level of food safety will be increased, because the investments supported will allow for producers to continue raising standards of protection, health and wellbeing of animals, as well as of the environment. *"This type of support, ultimately, aims to prepare Montenegrin agricultural sector, as well as the institutions, for future EU membership, through modernisation of production and strengthening of manufacturing competitiveness, as well as for the achievement of EU standards when it comes to increasing the quality of product, hygiene and food safety, introduction of new technologies and innovations and opening of new market opportunities", Kovačević emphasised.*

During the public call for IPARD-like, representatives

Vidaković: With "our" banks and interest rates, IPARD is seen as a gift



Željko Vidaković

"Realistically, farmers have excessive expectations from IPARD-like. This is because while such preferential programmes are common in the EU, since MIDAS ended there are no other programmes that would offer similar benefits to the Montenegrin farmers", Željko Vidaković, vice president of the Union of employers and owner of the firm "Ekoplant" told European Pulse.

"Financing of farmers, particularly from projects related to area of primary agricultural production in Montenegro, is extremely unfavourable, both in terms of enormous interest rates of 12 to 16%, practically without a grace period necessary in agriculture and, which is even worse, the fact that Montenegrin banks do not accept agricultural land and farm objects as a collateral. Therefore, a large majority of our farmers is unable to finance their projects or to increase its production" says Vidaković. That is why, according to him, the interest in IPARD like, as well as the expectations from it are so high, given that this project promises to return to the farmers 50 to 60% of the invested amount, which has been common practice in the EU states for decades, but is here seen as a gift. "Unfortunately, in anticipation of such benefits, many farmers decide to invest significant resources in agriculture, often without the necessary knowledge or experience" Vidaković added.

Considering relatively high number of submitted demands and business plans, he estimated that the presentation of IPARD-like programme was organised well, but also that hard socio-economic situation, in which Montenegrin citizens find themselves, should be taken into consideration, particularly in rural areas and in the northern part of state. He deems the issue of preparedness of Montenegrin farmers much more important, particularly of their ability to "withdraw" means from this and other EU funds. Vidaković reminded that the Union of employers and himself, several times during last 4-5 years, indicated that "our" banks unwillingly and not so often grant loans to farmers, usually due to collateral which is harder to convert into cash when it comes to agricultural property and village houses.

"We proposed the solution to problem, based on the European model – for state to help in the establishment of Agricultural guarantee fund which would accept that collateral, thereby providing the guarantees to business banks for agricultural loans. Former minister of agriculture and director of IRF accepted our initiative in principle, but due to tragic fate of dr. (Dragan) Lajović and departure of minister (Tarzan) Milošević that was terminated, and we still await for the AGF to be formed or the Agricultural loan-guarantee fund, which otherwise respects the tradition of developed EU countries up to 150 years", Vidaković explained. He concluded that "neither Montenegrin farmers, nor state institutions, are adequately prepared to withdraw the means of IPARD-like nor of other EU funds, intended for our agriculture".

of Ministry of agriculture and IPARD Directorate for payment informed agricultural producers on IPARD-like project through two stages of info-campaign - presentations and workshops.

Conditions and possibilities for obtaining support were explained through direct contact with manufacturers, as well as the dilemmas of manufacturers related to enrollment in register, gathering of documentation, filling out the applications, manner of meeting certain conditions... The campaign was also supported by personal participation from head of the EU Delegation to Montenegro **Mitja Drobnič**, Minister of agriculture, **Petar Ivanović**, advised farmers to

consider mutual cooperation and, if possible, to submit joint applications because Montenegro has limited resources for agricultural production, which is why average properties are small.

The best proof on the significance of IPARD programmes is the fact that 8% of GDP of Montenegro derives from agriculture, and means that are aimed for development of agriculture should, directly or indirectly, reach 50 000 citizens who live in rural areas and are engaged in agriculture. EU planned to make 39 million € available to Montenegro for withdrawal for 2016, once means of IPARD are at its disposal.

Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro,
Ambassador Mitja Drobnič

EC expects political responsibility for “Snimak”

In the interview to *European Pulse*, head of the Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro, Ambassador Mitja Drobnič, said the concerns about the so-called enlargement fatigue were “unfounded”. “The Commission's activities on the enlargement front have not diminished; instead they continue at the same pace. As the Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, **Mr Johannes Hahn**, noted during his first official visit to Montenegro in November last year, the future of EU enlargement and accession negotiations are not in doubt. Also, the very fact that Commissioner Hahn visited two candidate countries – Montenegro and Serbia – at the very beginning of his mandate, is a clear sign of the Commission's commitment to the enlargement process. The speed of the accession process, however, will be determined by the speed and the quality of the candidate countries' reforms”, Drobnič said when we asked him to comment on a recent assessment



Mitja Drobnič

of the Balkan Investigative Research Network (BIRN) that Commissioner Hahn's pronouncements on the violations of media freedom in Serbia, and the wiretapping scandal in Macedonia could only be interpreted as “do whatever you want, just don't kill each other”.

» *In Montenegro, the affair “Recording” saw no epilogue despite much interest from the EU. In its last Montenegro Progress Report, the EC only briefly mentioned the “Recording” affair twice. How do you comment that?*

As noted in the 2014 Progress Report, we

The Commission's activities on the enlargement front have not diminished; instead they continue at the same pace... The speed of the accession process, however, will be determined by the speed and the quality of the candidate countries' reforms

are aware that several proceedings are ongoing before the relevant courts for alleged misuse of public funds for political party purposes. The Commission also noted in the 2013 Progress Report that the parliamentary inquiry about this matter resulted in the adoption of a technical report without any specific recommendations. As recalled in the 2014 Report, the judicial follow-up to the alleged abuse of public funds for party political purposes remains to be completed and political responsibility ensured.

» *Could you please explain the procedure according to which the Commission will monitor the progress of Montenegro in the upcoming period? Will there be any reports on chapters 23 and 24 before the annual Progress report; when will the EC announce whether Montenegro met the temporary benchmarks and such?*

The European Commission continuously monitors progress made by all candidate and potential candidate countries, presented annually in the Progress Reports adopted in October by the Commission. The

As recalled in the European Commission's 2014 Report, the judicial follow-up to the alleged abuse of public funds for party political purposes remains to be completed and political responsibility ensured.



Commission also informs regularly the Council and Parliament on the situation in Montenegro with regard to EU accession negotiations. Progress is measured on the basis of decisions taken, legislation adopted and measures implemented. Assessment is based on information gathered and analysed by the Commission. Many sources are used, including contributions from the government of Montenegro, EU Member States experts, EU institutions and agencies reports, independent experts and various international and non-governmental organisations. Ultimately, the European Commission will assess whether the interim benchmarks will be met by the country and will make a recommendation to the Council once all interim benchmarks have been met. However, the timeline of reforms needed to meet them is in the hands of Montenegro.

» How would you comment the decision of the Montenegrin government to commission a Chinese company to carry out the highway construction? How do you generally see the interest of Chinese investors for the Balkans and Central and East European states?

We wish to see all projects, irrespective of the origin of those implementing them or financing them, to be implemented in a sustainable and financially sound manner as well as in compliance with the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA).

NATO accession may depend on the progress in EU integration

» To what extent could Montenegro's progress in negotiations with the EU affect NATO's decision to extend the country a membership invitation? For instance, if this year's Progress Report finds unsatisfactory progress in chapters 23 and 24, would the foreign ministers of NATO members, many of whom are also EU member states, still say that Montenegro did well enough on the rule of law to merit an invitation?

Progress achieved in the rule of law area has a direct positive impact on Montenegro's EU integration process. Since accession to NATO also has a rule of law dimension, we could expect that progress achieved in this area would also be positively reflected on Montenegro's process of accession to NATO.

» How do you see the role of NGO sector and media in Montenegro? Every once in a while, you hear the argument in the Montenegrin public that these entities are increasingly assuming the role of opposition parties.

As a general principle, we believe that an empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system and should be recognised and treated as such. This was also clearly stated in the European Commission's 2014 Progress Report. Both NGOs and media are an integral part of civil society. While we note that CSOs are integral to the political and socio-economic processes in every country, their role needs to be distinct from that of political parties.

V. Žugić

Greenland better off without EU



On February 1st 1985, Greenland decided to exclude itself from the EU, and in the subsequent 30 years it did better without being a part of EU than if it would have been inside it, says **Birger Poppel**,

sociologist from the University of Greenland. Greenland is the only country which terminated its membership in the EU. It is an autonomous territory of Denmark.

One of the advantages that stands out is that not being an EU member Greenland can decide on its own on fishing quotas, and does not have to deal with numerous European regulations. However, under the agreement with the EU, Greenland receives 40 million EUR from Brussels, or about 7% of the country's budget, mostly in exchange for permits issued to the EU fishing boats to operate in its waters. It is more or less the same amount of money that Greenland would receive from Brussels out of structural funds, which is why Greenland actually gained than if were a part of EU, or if it remained a member under the flag of Denmark, Poppel says.

Greenland also exerts some influence on EU policies which are important for the life on this island through lobbying activities of its embassy in Brussels.

Facebook calls to polls



Social network Facebook called all adults in the UK to register for voting in general elections on May 7. People from Facebook and the British electoral commission hope that using the social network to

call citizens to elections will especially increase the turnout of young people. Facebook is used by 35 million people from Britain every month, which is more than the number of people who voted in 2010 general elections in 2010 – 29.6 million. Facebook has become main platform for political discussions and debates in Britain. Every UK citizen who is using Facebook and is older than 18 received a message as a reminder to register for elections, and could use the link include in the message to register electronically at the site of the electoral commission.

And while on the one side the government is running a campaign to increase voter turnout, on the other the UK continues to violate the rights of the prison inmates, depriving them of the right to vote. That was also confirmed by the latest verdict of the European court for human rights on the rights of 1.015 inmates, who were not allowed to vote in the period 2009-2011.

Poland record producer of apples



The leading grain producers in EU in 2014 were France and Germany, while Poland leads in the production of apples, and Italy of tomato. Poland and Britain lead the production of carrots, while Netherlands and Spain accounted for almost the half of onion production for the EU. Data from the European statistical system show that Germany produced the majority of European milk and pork, while France leads in beef. The total value of agricultural production in the EU is EUR 392.28 billion EUR, with France accounting for EUR 70.5 billion, Germany EUR 51 billion, Italy EUR 48.3 billion, Spain EUR 41 billion and UK EUR 30.5 billion.

"Minimum wage" of 1.923 EUR



New European statistic shows that the minimum wage of a worker from Luxembourg nearly amounts to 2000 EUR, compared to that from Bulgaria, which is not even 200. However, when adjusted for the purchasing power, the differences are not so high: the lowest minimum wage in the EU is only four times lower than highest minimum wage. Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Italy and Sweden have no minimum wages. Out of 22 member countries that have a minimum wage, in January 2015, ten of them had minimum wages amount lower than 500 EUR a month – Bulgaria (184), Romania (218), Lithuania (300), Czech Republic (332), Hungary (333), Latvia (360), Slovakia (380), Estonia (390), Croatia (396) and Poland (410). Minimum wages ranging from 500-1000 EUR a month, in January, were recorded in Portugal (589), Greece (684), Malta (720), Spain (757) and in Slovenia (791). The remaining seven member states have minimum wages higher than 1000 EUR. Thus the minimum wage in the UK was 1.379 EUR, in France 1.458 EUR, in Ireland 1.462 EUR, in Germany 1.473 EUR, in Belgium and Netherlands 1.502 EUR, and in Luxembourg the record 1.923 EUR. 1.502, a u Luksemburgu maksimalnih 1.923 eura.

Why is there so much grey economy in the Balkans?

Informal employment rampant

Generations of workers in the Balkans, as well as elsewhere, have long forgotten the famous three eights of trade union demands: eight hours for work, eight hours for rest and eight hours for whatever they like. Why is there so much unreported work in the Balkans? Why do those who work not have a salary? How can employers "forget" about social contributions, healthcare and pension?

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, between 150.000 - 200.000 people work informally, and their number is increasing. Figures from the International Labour Organisation show that the rate of unreported employment has increased from 20 to 23%. In the context of high poverty and existential challenges, citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be choosers, and they are at the mercy of employers who often offer only minimum-wage employment, contributions or regular working hours. At the same time, high tax levels make it difficult for employers to hire workers legally. Worse yet, many are forced to go into mine fields, landfills or in mining pits without proper protection in order to earn a living, even though they are aware of the high health risks. A recent tragedy in the surface mine Dubrava in Tuzla where a quake and land erosion cost four men their lives showed how widespread illegal coal mining has become in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The young men took the risk of going into the mining pits without proper safety measures, in order to earn a wage of EUR 15, says **Almir Šehić**, brother of a young man who died. "They were aware of what they were doing, but the thing that bothers

Many are forced to go into mine fields, landfills or in mining pits without proper permits in order to earn a living, even though they are aware of the high risks

me the most is that they call him a thief. They are worse", Šehić states. Illegal employment is especially widespread in small businesses in restaurants and tourism, trade, exploitation and processing of wood, and service activities. If the state inspectorate finds a worker who is employed without a proper work contract, the employer is liable by law for a fine of between EUR 1.000 and EUR 7.500. One of the reasons employers do not report their workers is the extremely high tax level. Employers in Bosnia-Herzegovina have to pay an additional 70% of the basic wage in taxes and contributions, which pushes them to operate at odds with the law. Official data show that in **Serbia**, one in four workers is unreported. The number is rising, due to the economic crisis as well as the state tolerance towards this problem. According to the data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, by the end of 2014, 600.000 people worked without proper contracts, out of a total of 2.4 million employed, which is about 24%. **Vesna Pantelić**, of the Statistical Office, said that the labour force survey showed a growing number of unreported workers.

"The number has increased exponentially. 2014 was characterised by the rise in employment and a fall in the unemployment rate, but it also brought an increase in the informal sector, and thus the number of those working in the grey economy rose by another 100.000 between October 2013 and late 2014", Pantelić says. According to the trade unions, the real situation is even worse. Supervision of businesses, employers and workers slightly improved lately, but the hard figures show the gravity of problem. The fact that there are altogether 250 inspectors who supervise 360.000 registered employers, indicates the flaws of the system even on this basic level. **Nemanja Nenadić**, from *Transparency Serbia*, believes that much more effective mechanisms are needed: "It is quite certain that the state turns a blind eye, sometimes both, and tolerates this situation,



because more rigid controls would jeopardise many business entities that only survive in this manner, as well as the livelihoods of many people who earn their living in the grey market". In the midst of a complex cycle of preserving social peace, caused by the parallelism of formal and grey economy which exists for long time, a vicious cycle of unreported work is created. Increasingly, employers who regularly pay their dues, and who suffer the most of tax levy, have been moving into the grey zone. **Miladin Kovačević**, economist and associate of the Economic institute, believes that things will change once the structural reforms are introduced. "The levy on labour is really high. For each employee you have to add another 43% to his salary just to pay for the taxes and contributions and unemployment insurance. When local taxes are added, the figure goes up to 100%", Kovačević said. Fines for employers who are found employing workers informally can be as high as EUR 16.500. In practice, however, smaller fines are imposed, often under the legal minimum, and sometimes the inspectorate stops at a warning. Our correspondents believe that the only solution to the problem of informal economy is a firm decision by the state to end this state of affairs. At the moment, even some of the public firms fail to pay contributions to their employees, which is where the strict enforcement of the law should begin. The NGO sector and unions hope that the Law on protection of whistleblowers could have a significant contribution in the fight against unreported work. The Law applies to both the public and the private sector, and guarantees legal protection to all who report legal irregularities. European data for 2013 show that in **Croatia**, about 8% of employees earn at least a part of their monthly salary from unreported work. After Croatia declared last year as the year of fight against unreported work, they warned that state lost more than EUR 5.4 billion in contributions during the last decade to unreported work and tax evasion. Chief of

According to the Croatian authorities, the rate of undeclared work in Croatia has been falling. The reduction is mostly due to the legalisation of seasonal work in agriculture, automatic reporting of newly employed workers to the pension insurance fund, legal provisions for additional work of pensioners and those already in employment, flexible working hours, etc.

In Serbia there are altogether 250 inspectors who supervise 360.000 registered employers

Labour Inspectorate in the Ministry of Labour, **Ilija Tadić**, says that a series of newly adopted measures and scrutiny by his inspectors has been effective. During the last year, inspectors "caught" 774 unreported workers with Croatian citizenship, and 93 unreported foreigners, while the annual average for the last three years has been 1.121 undeclared Croatian citizens and 338 foreigners. The reduction is mostly due to the legalisation of seasonal work in agriculture, automatic reporting of newly employed workers to the pension insurance fund, legal provisions for additional work of pensioners and those already in employment, flexible working hours, etc. If an undeclared employee is discovered, the Inspectorate can "seal" or close down the business for a period of 15 or 30 days, in case of foreign workers, and impose fines. Tadić says that "sealing" can be avoided: "Employers have the opportunity to prevent the sealing of premises by paying 30.000 HRK for each of the illegally employed workers or foreigners". On the other hand, contrary to the state authorities, the Association of Independent Trade Unions of Croatia claims that expansion of informal work has not been abated, especially since the onset of the crisis. Namely, according to the AITUC criteria, informal work should not only encompass unreported contracts.

"We believe that informal work is also unpaid work, and that is the situation when an employee works overtime or during the holidays, and he/she is not being paid for that work adequately. Such work is most damaging for the health of the workers, their livelihoods, and for the Croatian pension and health systems, and – not least – for the public budget", says **Gordana Palajsa**, executive secretary for labour and social rights in that union organisation.

Scholarship recommends that – when it comes to all segments of grey economy, even to undeclared work – the thing that should be addressed first is the cause, not the consequence. The best solution for the reduction of grey economy and unreported work is overcoming the crisis and economic recovery.

Source: Radio Free Europe

Chapter 26: Education and culture



dr Mladen Perazić

The significance of Chapter 26 - Education and culture is reflected in the fact that in developed economies of the EU, resource of human capital development is recognized, and its quality primarily on the offer of appropriate education and training. EU cooperation in the *area of education*, vocational training and young ones is based on Articles 149 and 150 of chapter 9 of the EU Treaty. According to these articles, member states jurisdiction lies in the establishment of their education systems, the content of education and the preservation of cultural and linguistic diversity.

According to Lisbon strategy from 2000, the European Council set the goal of making the EU most competent and dynamic economy based on knowledge, capable of sustainable economic growth, with better employment opportunities, better jobs and higher social cohesion. Legal framework, which contains the guidelines for creating a society of knowledge in the EU, is manifested through a great number of the EU documents (The Bologna Declaration, the Lisbon Strategy, Copenhagen Declaration, etc.). Turning EU into leading world economy based on knowledge, will be possible only if education and training act as factors of economic growth, research and innovation, competitiveness,

sustainable employment, social involvement and active civil participation.

Nowadays, the EU uses the method of open coordination to harmonize educational policies. In this way, best practices are better spread and increasing convergence on the way to the most important objectives of the EU is achieved. It helps member states when forming their policies. This method enables a framework for cooperation with member states, or bringing closer of national policies and achieving goals that every state adopted. For the assessment of education and skills acquired, European Qualifications Framework as a tool for translation and international comparison of qualifications of individuals was established, for their assessment of the labour market.

Questions that were related to *culture* were not in the spotlight of interest in the moment the establishment of process of European integrations, during fifties of the twentieth century. It was only after the adoption of the Treaty of Maastricht, based on which the European Union was based, the culture was integrated in the EU's range of action.

Goal of mutual policy in the area of culture is not to harmonize cultural identities, but to protect and improve the richness of European culture. Therefore, "United in Diversity" is one of the main slogans of the EU, and it precisely points out that the Union is ready to assist countries in preserving their special features in different cultural expressions.

EU's own action objectives, in the area of culture, are formulated in the chapter 12 of Treaty on the European Community. In accordance with Article 150, activities of the Union are focused towards stimulation of cooperation between member states, and if necessary, supporting and complementing their action in:

- Improving knowledge and the popularization of the culture and history of European peoples,



- The preservation and protection of cultural heritage of European importance,
- Non-commercial cultural exchanges, and
- Artistic and literary creation, including the audiovisual sector.

In their implementation, EU seeks to respect national and regional diversity of member state cultures, but also foregrounds mutual cultural heritage.

Concept of reforming the system of *education* in Montenegro is based on an original approach that is modern, aligned with European tendencies, and, at the same time, respects positive achievements of the tradition of inherited system of education. Prior to reform, the system of education in Montenegro was excessively centralised. From that level, the goals, structure and the work in educational institutions were set. Based on the reform, it was decided for decentralization to take place according to European experiences, which implied reduction of public consumption and state costs, and increased participation of citizens in the financing of education, especially with the expansion of private institutions in this area.

Educational system in Montenegro is designed so that the educational policy is run by the parliament and the government through the Ministry of education and sport, which is responsible for defining state policy regarding the education, structuring and financing of education, establishing and management of educational institutions in private property, preparing legislation in the field of education and science, implementation of laws and other regulations that relate to pre-school, primary, secondary, special, higher and adult education, teacher training, adoption of curricula, approval of textbooks and literature, the development of scientific research, development of scientific and research organizations and agencies. Formal educational system in Montenegro is consisted of pre-school education, primary education, secondary general education, vocational education and higher education. The work of informal educational offer is defined by the Law on National Vocational Qualifications. Basic conditions for the



Whether Montenegro will lose their traditions and cultural identity in the EU?

• *Accession in the EU helps countries in preserving their identity and cultural features. EU respects and promotes diversity of its member states and their traditions and cultural features. Montenegrin language will become official language of the EU and thereby equal to other official languages of the EU.*

• *EU does not prescribe how educational system should be organised and everything that it needs to possess. That is in jurisdiction of national and local authorities. However, the EU conducts programmes with which educational exchanges are promoted so that the young could travel abroad for the purpose of studying or advanced training, learn foreign languages and participate in mutual activities with educational institutions in other countries.*

establishment and work of educational institutions, performance of educational work, governance and management, the network of educational institutions, training of teachers, professional bodies, adoption of educational programs, publishing textbooks, supervision over the work of institutions, concessions and financing are defined by the laws from the area of education.

Montenegrin **culture** is founded on traditional and cultural values and modern experiences, while



respecting diversity of cultural expressions inherent to creativity and cultural heritage. Article 76 of the Montenegrin Constitution prescribes the freedom of scientific, cultural and artistic creativity, scientific discoveries, and moral as well as property rights are guaranteed to their creators. Article 77 of the Constitution prescribes the obligation of the state to stimulate and support the development of education, science, culture, arts, sport, physical and technical culture, as well as to protect scientific, cultural and historic values, and Article 78 of the Constitution prescribes the obligation of everyone to protect natural and cultural heritage from general interest, as well as the commitment of the state to protect it. By the provision of Article 9 of the Constitution, Montenegro established that the ratified and published international treaties and generally accepted rules of international law are an integral part of the internal legal order and have primacy over national legislation and are directly applicable when they regulate relations that differ from internal legislation. Montenegro has legally regulated public interest in culture, status and rights of artists and experts in culture, stimulation and support of culture, as well as the financing of cultural activities and other issues of importance for culture. For the realization of the activities, or jobs that relate to the area of culture, the competence lies with the state and local government, as well as the public institutions.

The Agreement on the Stabilisation and Association (ASA) defined that Montenegro

will cooperate with the EU on raising the level of general education and vocational education and training in Montenegro, as well as in youth policy and their employment, including informal education. A priority for higher education will be the achievement of the objectives of the Bologna Declaration within the intergovernmental Bologna process. It will also work together to make the access of all levels of education and training in Montenegro freed of discrimination based on sex, race, ethnic origin or religion.

It was also defined that the contracting parties will promote *cultural cooperation*. Among other things, the cooperation will serve to the increase of mutual understanding and respect among individuals, communities and peoples. Contracting parties committed to cooperation regarding the promotion of cultural differences, particularly within the framework of UNESCO's Convention on the protection and promotion of diversity of cultural expression.

Having in mind the results achieved regarding the reform of educational system in Montenegro, no potential problems during negotiations in these chapters are expected. Montenegro has incorporated values and goals of the EU into its legislative and strategic documents.

In recent years, Montenegro has been recognised as an active participant in reforms, based on the comparative analysis of educational systems of European countries. Of course, further work needs to be done especially in the field of ensuring the quality of all levels of education, both in formal and in informal system of education. Montenegro will actively participate in all programmes of the EU regarding the area of culture. In terms of defining the place of culture in the concept of sustainable development, more active work is needed on establishing a relationship with the culture of the economy sector in order to diversify funding of culture sector and promoting cultural values to a wider audience.

Gender equality in European Union

Quotas against traditional norms

Christine Lagarde, the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, insists that gender equality is not only a “moral imperative”, but would bring about a “more profitable global economy”. According to Lagarde, it is important to demonstrate to policymakers and politicians that equality in the workplace “actually makes economic sense,” and that a level playing field can spark “more growth,” as well as bring about a “more diverse society,” that can be “much more profitable from the global economic point of view.”

The EU has made equality between women and men one of its founding values in 1957. Since then anti-discrimination legislation has been adopted and subsequent strategies have been fleshed out. Three years ago, **Viviane Reding**, the then Commissioner in charge of Justice and fundamental rights even pushed for gender quotas on company boards, arguing it made perfect economic sense. However, the legislation has been blocked for months in the European Council. Meantime, a report published recently by the European Women's Lobby shows that overwhelmingly, the most effective way to increase the representation of women in decision-making positions – and in this case, on company boards – is through binding legislation with regular monitoring, intermediary targets and strong sanctions.

“Europe as a whole is dragging its feet and making progress that is all too slow,” said **Joanna Maycock**, Secretary-General of the European Women's Lobby. “There is a growing frustration about the fact that we seem stuck in inequality,” she added. “A lack of diversity has proven itself to be dangerous for our democracies, our societies and our economies. We need a paradigm shift and we need it fast. A new way of looking at things,” Maycock said.

Since the European Commission proposed the law,

The women are on average still paid less for the same work – the gender pay gap is now 16%. Women are also still overrepresented in lower paid sectors in the labour market, and under-represented in decision-making positions, says Věra Jourová, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality.

The EU has made equality between women and men one of its founding values in 1957. Since then anti-discrimination legislation has been adopted and subsequent strategies have been fleshed out.

cracks in the glass ceiling have started to show. More and more companies are competing to attract the best female talent. Since October 2010, the share of women on boards has risen by 7.6%. But that is not enough. The Commission is expected to draft a new strategy reviewing priorities of the current gender equality strategy and evaluating progress made.

Věra Jourová, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, notes that the EU has made progress on many aspects of gender equality but many inequalities remain. Women are on average still paid less for the same work – the gender pay gap is now around 16% – and continue to work more unpaid hours than men at home. Women are also still overrepresented in lower paid sectors in the labour market, and under-represented in decision-making positions, Jourová added.

To give a clear signal to the Commission, the European Parliament is drafting its own-initiative report on the post 2015 strategy for gender equality. Rapporteur **Maria Noichl** said in an interview with *EurActiv* that Brussels must adopt clear targets and effective monitoring mechanisms to tackle gender disparity. The draft report urges the executive to consider the objectives of the future strategy as an aspect of the European Semester and to insert a gender perspective in the country-specific recommendations and the Annual Growth Survey.

Gender equality activists point out that it is unconceivable that some European countries have a worse record on gender equality than some non-developed countries. According to the most recent World Economic Forum Gender gap index, Italy, Europe's fourth largest economy, has a bigger gender gap than Nicaragua, Mozambique and Botswana. The index reveals Nordic countries are the best places for women to live. Iceland, for the sixth year running, topped the global chart, followed by Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Economic powerhouse Germany came 12th, let down, like many countries,

According to the most recent World Economic Forum Gender report on the gender gap, Italy – one of EU's most developed member states – has a bigger gender gap than Nicaragua, Mozambique and Botswana.

by women's participation in politics. Croatia, 55th in the 142-country index, was one of just six nations whose gender gaps have grown since 2005.

One of Commissioner Jourová's tasks in 2015, and a personal priority, she said, is the unblocking of negotiations on the EU's anti-Discrimination directive. "Discrimination has no place in our union," she said. According to the report Fair Play: More Equal Laws Boost Female Labour Force Participation, published last week by the IMF, restrictions on women's rights are strongly associated with gender gaps in labour force participation, which can negatively impact a country's GDP.

But if the experiment with the introduction of mandatory gender quotas in the supervisory boards of German public companies is any guidance, the latest initiative of the European Commission is unlikely to take off in the recent future. Only a few days before the bill's expected approval in the Bundestag, the proposed legislation is more controversial than ever – within the country's political parties and among business representatives, but also for worker's unions and legal experts. Among other, quotas' opponents have labelled the legislation as unconstitutional, and at least partially incompatible with EU law. If approved, the law would require all listed companies in Germany, in which the employees are fully entitled to representation on the supervisory board, to fill 30% of these seats with. If the quota is ignored, sanctions could be imposed on the companies in violation. If no qualified woman can be found, the bill indicates that the positions must remain unfilled.

This is precisely why many critics disagree with the details of the measure. The sanction of the "empty chair", if too few women are available for the selection

Nordic countries are the best places for women to live. Iceland, for the sixth year running, topped the global chart, followed by Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

of the supervisory board, would, according to the opponents, undermine ownership authority and the ability of the company to function normally. In some sectors, such as construction and heavy industries, it is simply unlikely that enough women can be found.

On the other hand, Germany's Left Party and Greens, who would have liked to set a quota for women at 40%, worry that the law does not go far enough. Chairman of the Bundestag's Legal Affairs Committee **Renate Künast** criticised the fact that the quota only applies to supervisory boards, not the management boards for operational business.

Meanwhile, employers warn that the present initiative is enough to impose enormous administrative costs on the firms, with likely negative repercussions for economic growth. **Ingo Kramer**, President of the

Judging by the experiment with the introduction of binding gender quotas in the supervisory boards of German public firms, European Commission initiative is unlikely to take off in the near future.

German Employers Association, especially criticised the complicated selection procedures for a new member of the supervisory board in the event that the quota is not met. The Federation of German Industries (BDI) is also certain that the burdens will increase, calling for exceptions for small boards of up to three persons. Industry and employer groups agree that the Minister of Justice, who drafted the law, underestimated the costs for the private economy of the new law. Moreover, both insist that government-mandated appointment of women to supervisory boards is unlikely to strengthen their role in the management of companies. At the same time, experiences of countries that have already implemented such quotas – such as Norway, Italy and France – suggest that the quotas have no negative effect on the economic performance of the companies, and may even lead to significant improvements. "In Italy, since we have the quota law, figures prove that the quality and performance of boards improved. We need to use these means, quotas, to achieve a real change of culture," said **Alessia Mosca**, member of the group of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament.

Source: EurActiv

Draft resolution of the European Parliament on Montenegro

Limited progress in combating corruption, despite substantial financing from the donors

On 22 February 2015, Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the 2014 Progress Report on Montenegro, in which it urged Montenegro to adopt a solid track record in the rule of law, as a fundamental prerequisite for EU accession. The Committee adopted the resolution after discussing some 180 amendments submitted on the draft resolution prepared by the EP rapporteur for Montenegro **Charles Tannock**.

The document welcomes the progress made in accession negotiations, with a total of 16 chapters open and two provisionally closed. It also notes that Montenegro is currently the only country in the region opening new negotiating chapters with the EU, which, although a welcome development also constitutes increased responsibility. In that context, the EP warned that “progress in the negotiations and the improving strategic, normative and institutional framework need to be accompanied by real progress on the ground”.

The Resolution reiterates that that rule of law-related reforms are essential condition for progress in overall accession talks, and that political will remains crucial for achieving progress in the fight against corruption and organised crime. The European Parliament “is concerned that, despite the substantial financial resources channelled from international donors to the authorities, only limited progress was made in combating corruption which remains a threat to the proper functioning and stability of democratic institutions, the rule of law and economic development”, states the Resolution, urging a more active participation and effective cooperation of government, all sectors of public life and civil society in prevention as well as in strengthening the legislative framework and protecting whistle-blowers.

Resolution called on judiciary to work in a more transparent way in the field of corruption and organised crime cases especially when it comes to publishing the names of companies, individuals and civil servants involved in such crimes in verdicts.

The EP welcomed the new judicial reform strategy and noted with satisfaction that the relevant action plan is generally implemented on time and that the new Supreme State Prosecutor was elected. Nevertheless, the EP “continues to be seriously concerned about undue influence on judicial independence, particularly in the recruitment and career development of judges and prosecutors” as well as with the backlog of cases pending before the Constitutional Court, especially those related to the possible systematic human rights violation, such as the initiative to examine the constitutionality of the Law on Misdemeanours. The Resolution also expressed concern that no serious efforts have been taken to tackle impunity in war crime cases, and called on the authorities to prosecute war crimes cases “including at the highest level”, and ensure the implementation of court rulings and that victims have swift access to justice and fair compensation.

EP “urges the authorities to enhance the capacity of prosecutors, judges, police and other law enforcement agencies and to develop a solid

The EP stressed the need to improve consultation mechanisms with civil society organisations (CSOs)



KAP stirring trouble again

The Resolution also touched upon the state of the Montenegrin economy, expressing concern over the lack of tangible improvement in the labour market situation and persistently high youth and long-term unemployment. The EP warned about the delay in the resolution of the bankruptcy procedure of Montenegro's biggest industrial manufacturer, the aluminium plant KAP, which is in breach of the country's obligations under the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) due to excessive state aid. The government has been in charge of KAP since 2013, when KAP was declared bankrupt and the Russian owned CEAC pulled out of the company. CEAC has sued Montenegro for damages before the international arbitration tribunal in Cyprus, claiming 1 billion euro in compensation for the losses it allegedly incurred due to government's interference in the running of the company, and the Cypriot court has placed injunction on the sale of KAP until the dispute can be settled. Montenegrin government, on the other hand, denied CEAC's accusations, blaming the Russian company for KAP's difficulties, and has since sold KAP to the Montenegrin company Uniprom. Both the Commission and the European Parliament have since warned Montenegro that such actions constitute a breach of the international law. In its latest Resolution, the EP "regrets that Montenegro has ignored the injunction of the Cypriot court regarding the KAP sale and calls on Montenegro to fully recognize relevant decisions by the judicial authorities of EU Member States".

track record of investigations, prosecutions and convictions at all levels including high-level corruption cases; welcomes the adoption of anticorruption laws [...] and calls for their effective implementation". Moreover, the EP also called on judiciary to work in a more transparent way in the field of corruption and organised crime cases especially when it comes to publishing the names of companies, individuals and civil servants involved in such crimes in verdicts.

The EP expressed concern that no serious efforts have been taken to tackle impunity in war crime cases, and called on the authorities to prosecute war crimes cases "including at the highest level"

The European Parliament also stressed the need to improve consultation mechanisms with civil society organisations (CSOs) to achieve more transparency in policy and law-making in an inclusive process. It welcomed the public discussions on the revision of action plans for chapters 23 and 24 but warned that a sufficient time frame should be provided for meaningful consultation of CSOs. The EP urged the competent authorities to further develop sustainable public funding for CSOs and an appropriate institutional framework. "The EP calls on competent authorities to adjust the legal framework and practices in order to protect civil society activists against attacks and hatred reportedly propagated in certain newspapers, and build a climate in which they can work without fear of reprisal", states the Resolution.

In the same vein, the MEPs reiterated the importance of freedom of expression as one of the core values of the EU. The EP "considers it essential for journalists to have full independence, and is greatly concerned about the deteriorating state of media freedom and the weak professional and ethical standards among media practitioners in Montenegro". Furthermore, the EP "strongly deplores that targeted incidents against journalists and media property continue; urges the competent authorities to achieve a consistent track record of prosecutions and final convictions of perpetrators; considers it essential for deepening democratic standards to have an independent public service media with editorial independence, stable and sustainable financing; stresses the responsibility of all those in politics and the media to nurture a climate of tolerance for different opinions", states the document.

Prepared by V.Š.

EU warns that the number of unfounded requests for asylum from citizens of the five Western Balkan states continues to increase

Three out of 100 persons actually need the asylum

European Commission (EC) warned that further measures are needed in order to preserve the integrity of visa-free regime for Western Balkans states and prevent abuses of the asylum system. In the report of EC, published in February 25, it is stated that the number of requests for the asylum of citizens of five Western Balkans states in EU and Schengen zone countries is in constant increase and that it reached its peak in 2013, namely 53.705. Data show that during nine months in 2014, number of requests was 40% bigger compared to same period in 2013.

Serbian citizens are most common between asylum seekers, and they account for 42% in total number of seekers. They are followed by citizens of Macedonia and Albania, 21%, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 14%, and Montenegro 2%, according to data of EC. On the other hand, rate of granting asylum continues to drop, meaning that great number of requests for asylum is unfounded. For citizens of Serbia, the rate of granting the asylums for 2013 was 2.7%, for Montenegrin citizens 3.7%, for Macedonian 1%, while for the citizens of Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina 8.1% or 5.9%. Citizens of Western Balkans most usually seek for asylum in Germany.

In order to resolve the issue of illegal migrations, EC recommended that Western Balkans states should increase targeted aid for minority population, especially for Roma, improve cooperation and exchange of information with EU member states, EC, Europol and European Asylum Support Office (EASO), punish persons who allow the abuse of visa-free regime, improve border control and campaigns aimed to define the rights and commitments of visa-free travelling regime.

These alarming data of Commission are not related to end of 2014 and beginning of 2015, when high number of illegal crossings across Serbian-Hungarian border of citizens of Kosovo was registered, mostly in Subotica, on which regional and media in Europe widely reported, using the term exodus thereby.

In that regard, Swiss daily *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* wrote how well informed diplomat from Priština believes that realistically 50.000 persons left Kosovo only from the beginning of this year. "Kosovo Ministry of education stated that 5200 students left during last several months. Those figures are impressive given that Kosovo has 1.8 million citizens." Daily stated that citizens travel from Kosovo to Subotica by bus, where smugglers enter the scene, who organise the illegal crossing over border for 250 EUR per person. In addition, it is stated that political leadership of Kosovo has not done anything in order to provide economic perspective since it obtained independence in 2008. Vienna *Standard* wrote that taxi drivers in Subotica drive people to Hungarian border daily as well as to places that are remotely far from official borders: "They added that they are not doing anything illegal, same as the owners of hotel in Palić, and look forward to good business."

German daily *Die Deutsche Zeitung* published the statement of a politician from Christian-social union Marcel Huber after the session of Bavarian government, that "this is another crisis situation" and if it continues this way, 7000 places at reception centres soon won't be enough. "Huber told that this is the case of organised abuse of right of asylum; that people arrive mostly by buses and in good mood; that he was told that the ambient on bus station in Priština abounds in celebration. He also added that Kosovo government already addressed an appeal to Bavarian government, begging it to return those people as soon as possible, because Kosovo needs them."

Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro joined the EU visa-free regime in December of 2009, and Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania in November of 2010. Kosovo still did not obtain visa-free regime.

V.Ž.

High school students from different Montenegrin municipalities learn together about human rights



Centre for civic education (CCE) organised the work of XX generation of School of human rights in Miločer, from 12th to 15th February 2014, with the support from US Embassy in Montenegro, through project "Youth build Montenegro". School was attended by 30 pupils from high schools from Podgorica, city municipality Tuzi, Bijelo Polje, Danilovgrad, Rožaje, Plav, Tivat, Bar, Mojkovac, Berane, Cetinje, Nikšić and Pljevlja. During the four-day intensive curriculum, participants had 21 sessions in form of lectures, workshops, forum theatre, film screenings, practical work in groups etc, aimed to provide them the knowledge about the contemporary concept of human rights, development of the idea of human rights, legal and institutional mechanisms of protection, culture of human rights,

principles of tolerance, solidarity, non-violent communication, as well as specific issues related to discrimination (especially marginalized groups), facing the past, multiculturalism, democratic participation of youth and corruption in education. Lecturers at the School come from different areas of activity: **Tea Gorjanc Prelević**, executive director of Human Rights Action, **Danijel Kalezić**, President of the Managing Board of the Montenegrin LGBTIQ Association "Queer Montenegro", **Marijana Laković Drašković**, lawyer, **Andrija Đukanović**, programme coordinator of the Roma Education Fund, **Maja Raičević**, executive director of the Centre for Women's Rights, **Dragoljub Duško Vuković**, journalist, **Marina Vujačić**, executive director of the Association of Youth with disabilities of Montenegro, **Tamara Milić**, psychologist, **Saša Mijović**, executive director of the NGO 4 Life, **Petar Đukanović**, programme coordinator of the CCE, **Tamara Milaš**, programme associate of the CCE and spokesperson for Coalition for RECOM in Montenegro and **Dragana Tripković**, executive director of the ATAК. In March, the participants will visit some of the institutions key for protection of human rights and be awarded with diplomas. In addition, support will be provided to participants in order for them to transform their ideas in actual activities focused towards the promotion of human rights in their local communities.



Steps of the coalition for equality STEP

Final conference of Coalition for equality - STEP, was held in Belgrade on February 5th 2015. Conference summed up all the activities within project *Networking of civil society in protection of jeopardised human rights in Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo*, realised with financial support of European Commission during 2013/14. Representatives of state and international institutions, as well as of EU Delegation to Serbia spoke during the conference. In addition to presentation of project activities and results achieved, the participants of conference discussed about problems they face with in their activism and about the relation of government and society towards individuals and organisations that deal with human rights. "Three views on fight against discrimination" brochure was also presented at conference, which contains three studies of practical policy that relate to significance of monitoring of trial in cases of discrimination, rights of LGBT persons and political representation of women. Coalition STEP is consisted of Lawyers' Committee for human rights - YUCOM, Belgrade centre for human rights, Network of the Committees for human rights in Serbia CHRIS and Gay Straight Alliance GSA (from Serbia); Fund for humanitarian right Kosovo and Youth initiative for human rights (from Kosovo); Centre for civic education (CCE) and LGBT Forum Progress (from Montenegro). **Petar Đukanović**, programme coordinator and **Tamara Milaš**, associate on programmes participated on conference on the behalf of CCE.

Supervision over the work of Parliamentary committees

Centre for civic education (CCE) continued with systematic supervision over the work of several Parliamentary committees of Montenegro which, based on their competencies, cover the topics with which CCE also deals with. Thus, **Snežana Kaluđerović**, programme coordinator at CCE, supervised the session of Committee of education, science, culture and sport, held on February 17th 2015, where they discussed the Report on the work of Committee for 2014. **Boris Marić**, senior legal advisor at CCE, was present at the session of Legislative committee, held on February 9th 2015 at which the MPs discussed the amendments on the Proposal of law on the amendments of Law on NSA, among other things. Committee for anticorruption held its session on February 11th 2015, where **Željka Četković**, programme associate at CCE, participated. The Report on the work of Committee for anticorruption for 2014 was adopted on the aforementioned session, as well as the Plan for the work of Committee for 2015.

How could the Parliament's oversight role be improved?

Institute Alternative (IA), in cooperation with Foundation Institute for open society - Think Tank Fund, organised a conference: "How could the Parliament's oversight role be improved?" in Podgorica on February 27th 2015. There was some discussion at the conference regarding the use of supervising mechanisms that are at disposal to MPs, as well as about the obstacles for a more active political supervision over the work of Government and negotiation process by the Parliament. Introductory speakers were **Stevo Muk**, president of Administrative board of Institute Alternative and **Ranko Krivokapić**, president of Parliament of Montenegro.

Aleksandar Damjanović, president of Committee for economy, finances and budget, **Marta Šćepanović**, MP, and **Rifat Rastoder**, president of Committee for political system, judiciary and administration spoke during first panel "Towards more efficient use of supervising mechanisms of Parliament". **Predrag Bulatović**, president of Committee for anticorruption, **Slaven Radunović**, president of Committee for European integrations, **Svetlana Rajković**, negotiator for chapters 23 and 24 and **Jovana Marović**, research coordinator at Institute Alternative, spoke during second panel "Parliament and fight against corruption/process of negotiation within chapter 23". **Boris Marić**, senior legal advisor, attended the meeting on the behalf of Centre for civic education (CCE).



CCE representatives on meeting with president of Swedish Parliament



During his staying in Montenegro, Urban Ahlin, president of Parliament of Kingdom of Sweden, in addition to officials from Government and Parliament, met with representatives of NGO sector. Thus, Daliborka Uljarević, executive director of Centre for civic education (CCE), had a special meeting with him, whereby associates of mister Ahlin, Boris Marić, senior legal advisor at CCE, and Ana Vujošević, programme associate at CCE, attended the meeting. The emphasis of meeting was on the setting in which civil society in Montenegro acts, and on the challenges which critically oriented NGOs face with, as well as on certain programme segments of CCE.

A.V

Visegrad Summer School in Krakow

The Visegrad Summer School is a two-week cycle of training sessions for young Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovakian students, as well as their peers from other Central and Eastern European countries. The purpose of the project is to deepen the knowledge about regional and global challenges, liquidation of mutual stereotypes, building of bonds and friendly contacts. The programme of the 14th Visegrad Summer School encompasses lectures, discussions on current political, cultural and social affairs in a regional, global and European perspective. Apart from experts and intellectuals, the school hosts ambassadors, ministers, representatives of the European Union, scientists, politicians, businessmen, journalists, artists, representatives of national and local authorities, as well as non-governmental organizations. The School participants will be involved in preparation of projects within the scope of international cooperation and will take an active part in the cultural life of Kraków; during a study trip, they will learn about cultural heritage of Małopolska. Some of the debates, lectures and meetings will be open for the public. Eligible participants are students, graduates, PhD researchers, young professionals from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine and other eligible countries that include: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, Serbia and Slovenia. The organizers will provide: educational programme and materials; special events; accommodation and board. Participants will cover travel costs to/from/in Krakow; insurance; registration fee of 75 Euro. Deadline for submitting on-line applications: **31 March 2015**. Accepted participants will be informed by 30 April 2015.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.visegradsummerschool.org>

International MA in European Project Planning and Management

The objective of the International Master in European Project Planning and Management is to provide participants with the skills to successfully work in the field of European cooperation, through the use of fundings made available by the European Commission. The target group of the Master are graduates in any discipline. The pre-requisites are: university degree and a good knowledge of English. The Master course's programme is organized in two main modules: European Project Planning and European Project Management. The location where the Master course is held is Pixel's headquarters, in Florence (Italy). The fourth edition of the International Master in European Project Planning and Management starts on 12 October 2015. In the period 12 October to 11 December 2015, the master course is held at Pixel site, in Florence, daily, Monday through Friday from 9:00 to 18:00. In the period January to March 2016, the international internship is organized for all participants. The enrolment fee is 3,600 EUR. It includes: participation in the Master, teaching material and organization of the international internship. The programme is opened to graduates in any discipline who hold university degree and a good knowledge of English. The deadline for registration is **19 June 2015**.

For more information, please visit: http://euoplan.pixel-online.org/MST_intro.php

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